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MAY 1966

Prabuddha Bharata

**OR
AWAKENED INDIA**



**By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.**

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MAY 1966

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

ARE THE BACKBONE OF DEFENCE

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Vol. LXXI

MAY 1966

No. 5



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—:0:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

(98)

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama
Bangalore City
8 July 1921

Dear Sriman—,

I have received your letter. It is good that all your money has been stolen away—this is perhaps the decree of the Master. *Sādhus* (monks) who have renounced all should not have money with them. You are a dedicated monk and it is because of this fact that the Master has snatched those all from you through a thief. Well done ! It is not at all desirable for a dedicated monk to have money with him for, due to its very presence, the reliance upon God becomes divided and it gives rise to the other desires.

I am happy to learn about the monk, named Sankarananda. May God give him perfect knowledge. Knowledge and Devotion in their pure states are but one and same. This has been said by the Master and we too, by His grace, have realized it to some extent in our own life. By His grace desires can be obliterated. If the mind assiduously strives for *samādhi* then the desires cannot persist in the mind. Even if they arise, they die down.

Desires are the common traits of human mind but in the mind of a devotee of God the desires, even if they come cannot last long. You have written that you like to shift to some other place as you feel distracted in mind there. Quite a good idea. See how the Master wishes. Most probably that would appear to be better even. I pray that your heart's desires may become fulfilled. Merge yourself completely in Him. Pay occasional visits to Sankaranandaji for, by that way, you will feel a renewed hankering for the spiritual practices.

We are not certain till now as to the extent of our stay here. A new Math is being built at Travancore and it is nearing completion. As Tulasi Maharaj says we may have to go over there after two months for its consecration. Meanwhile, we may visit the other places.

My heartfelt blessings, love and affection to you.

Well-wisher,
Shivananda

(99)

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama
Bull Temple Road
27 July 1921

Dear Sriman—,

I am very much delighted to receive your letter after a long time. It is indeed a fact that, by the grace of the Master, you are our own and we too are equally the same to you. There is not the least doubt about this. We know it for certain that the Master is looking after you always. When the father holds the child by hand, the child has the least possible chance to fall down altogether. The child may even slip out but he cannot fall for there is the father holding him by the hand. In the same way the Master is holding you. It is my firm conviction that you will attain to purity, devotion and renunciation and will become full with love and compassion.

I get the news of the Math occasionally. Bhai Bhupati was verily blessed with the direct grace of the Master and had enough of spiritual practices in his life. He is certainly resting in peace at the feet of the Master.

The season of fever has ensued. By the grace of the Master let anybody not suffer much. I hope it to be so. You have been working a lot alone. Of course it happens to be so at times but, by the will of the Master, there will be some way out, for there cannot be a deadlock in work. We know about your compassion towards the poor neighbours. This compassion is specially predominant in the divine role of the Master—and moreover what greater virtue is there other than this compassion!

You know my heartfelt blessing, love and affection and convey the same to all. By the grace of the Master, we all including Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) are keeping well. The place is health-giving. There is much dearth of rains here. It drizzles a bit but that is insignificant.

Your well-wisher,
Shivananda

ROMAIN ROLLAND ON RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER

[The Birth Centenary of M. Romain Rolland, born on January 29, 1866, is being observed this year by his admirers in different parts of the world, including India. Rolland's fame does not rest in merely having been a great artist and a man of letters—a Nobel laureate; he was also loved and admired for his profound humanism and universal outlook. His search after Truth led him to some of the great personalities of India—his contemporaries as well as those who preceded him; and as a result of this contact, we have the masterly biographies of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi. His letters to Sri Rabindranath Tagore, too, are revealing, inasmuch as they express the bond of love and fraternity that the great French savant had with India and its culture. He thought and believed that 'some direct family affinity between an Aryan of the Occident and an Aryan of the Orient had brought him so near to the Indian mind'. 'I am convinced', he wrote in 1924, 'that it was I who must have descended down the slopes of the Himalayas with those victorious Aryans.' He began believing, as he wrote in his preface to the French edition of *Young India*, that 'the spiritual tide rising from the east ... will not recede until it has covered the shores of Europe'.

His two books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, originally in French, were the results of his sustained labour of love and earnest desire to understand these two great personalities and present them to the western mind. After he had already come in contact with Indian thought and had written a fine biography of Mahatma Gandhi in 1921, he came to know about Ramakrishna-Vivekananda through a book by Dhan Gopal Mukherji. He was instantly attracted by these two 'man-gods' and decided to bring them before his European readers. But before he actually took to writing about them, he made himself sure that he was competent to write on these men who represented the best that was in Indian thought and culture. For this, he avidly went through all available material on them and contacted those who he thought, could really enlighten him about them. Naturally, he established contact with Swami Shivananda, the then President of the Ramakrishna Order and the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati in India, whose publications he had already read to his benefit. He, therefore, exchanged many letters, while he was writing these biographies, with Swami Ashokananda, the then editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*; and here we have pleasure in publishing the first letter that he wrote.

We hope, in the year of his birth centenary when we offer our homage to Romain Rolland, this letter would be read with interest by our readers, as it reveals his earnestness, spirit of enquiry, and deep conviction about the spiritual values of India.]

Switzerland
Villeneuve (Vand)
Villa Olga
June 26 1927

Dear Sir :

It is now one year since some pages of Dhan Gopal Mukherjee [*'The Face of Silence'*—a book by Mukherjee on Sri Ramakrishna published in America] have effectually revealed to me the great soul of Sri Ramakrishna; and this beam of light has impelled me to know more of his life and thought. For several months my sister and I have been reading the books published by the Prabuddha Bharata Office and the Ramakrishna Mission, which Indian friends have kindly sent to us.

Last month we were visited by Miss Macleod [a friend and disciple of Swami Vivekananda]; and during the days passed together we talked at length of Swami Vivekananda.

I look upon Swami Vivekananda as a fire of spiritual energy—and on Sri Ramakrishna as a flower of love. Both radiate God and Life Eternal. The greater genius is Vivekananda. But Sri Ramakrishna is above genius.

I should like to consecrate a book to them which would make them known to the general public in the West. The task is long and extremely difficult. There exists in their rich thought a wealth of varied elements for which the classification in that spirit of orderliness demanded by the intelligence (and even the heart) of the West, does not seem to have been made. A part of this content is specifically Indian in character.

Another part is universal. And it is this with which I ought to concern myself. I have to take into consideration the response in the brain of the European to certain words and the consequences in action that might result. Because for him everything is or must turn into action. Hence lies the danger, for the thought of Sri Ramakrishna and above all of Vivekananda, which is eminently plastic and often adaptive to the different types of soul to which they address themselves—(Ramakrishna, by the instinct of love that is stirred by those with whom he comes in contact, Vivekananda, by the passionate reaction that desires to separate and fashion the spirit, seem practically contradictory)—this thought is expressed in such manifold meanings.

Moreover we are, in Europe—and in the whole world—at a time of social upheaval—at the close of one whirlwind of activity and at the commencement of a new one, even more formidable than the preceding—in which millions of men seek direction. One must try to give it to them as clearly, as simply and as succinctly as possible, and that without delay: for the cyclone will not wait.

Hence the necessity to see that the ray which can illuminate the road on which these people must march be permitted to filter through from the Sun of Truth.

I am certain that Swami Vivekananda would have felt this strongly if he had lived at the hour in which we live today. But at the time of his

death, and above all that of Sri Ramakrishna, the maelstrom of the world had not yet caught up all the races in its dizzy vortex; it was still ominous night, with the tempest gathering in silence. At present, it is essential to think of all those doomed to perish (I speak of the death of the soul) if one does not fly to their help.

My sister and I are very eager to enter into relation with Sister Christine [a disciple of Swami Vivekananda], whom we have heard spoken of with tenderness and veneration. Few spirits, I believe, have had the privilege of being as close as hers to Vivekananda's. We should be happy to be able to get into touch with her by letter—in the hope that some day perchance it may be given us to meet.

We have also heard that at Advaita Ashrama in the Himalaya is a scholar, Boshi Sen [actually at Almora town. He is still the Director of Vivekananda Laboratories there], a student of Sir Jagadis Chunder Bose [the world renowned Botanist], and a fervent disciple of Vivekananda. We should be delighted to learn from him or his intermediary Swami Vivekananda's ideas about science. As I sense it (and as my reason tells me) science is one of the roads of God, and it is logically (?) the one along which the West would walk toward Him with greatest assurance, were it better guided. It would be useful to know if Vivekananda had occasion to express his views in this regard, and in what work.

I send you, dear Swami Ashokananda, and to your brothers, my fraternal greeting. I feel myself united to you in the consuming contact of this Divine Unity, of which Sri Ramakrishna was the Song of Songs made man.

Affectionately yours,
Romain Rolland

'I am bringing to Europe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna. This symphony, like those of our classical masters, is built up of a hundred different musical elements emanating from the past. But the sovereign personality concentrating in himself the diversity of these elements and fashioning them into a royal harmony, is always the one who gives his name to the work, though it contains within itself the labour of generations. And with his victorious sign he marks a new era.'

Romain Rolland

RELIGION AND CREDULITY

[EDITORIAL]

Introduction: Religion is as old as mankind. This is the oldest of beliefs that man has ever had in the world. Yet it is perhaps the most misunderstood of all the themes of human history where credulity and religion move shoulder to shoulder. Stories of wars and upheavals, of fanaticisms and bigotry peppered with names and garnished with built-in contradictions and transmitted by the traditions down the ages, the credulities often rise like the barricades on the road of human progress which man has still to encounter. Perhaps the worst indictment of this chequered history is the tame acquiescence in all these primitiveness and their acceptance as a way of life. Humanity, to think in the other way, is far from having outgrown the stage of childhood. The teachings of the prophets and seers have been too profound and too simple to make this history softened down for us.

In the long spiral of human evolution beginning from primitive fetishism and paganism down to the creative imaginations of the modern centuries when man has created not a reality but a formidable fiction with his superior intellectual gifts and marvellous sparks of genius, he still gropes clumsily towards a true religious understanding. Credulities of all kinds spread much more easily than truth or rational doctrines even today. The illusion that rational thoughts spread extensively, is due to the fact that they are so often transformed into palatable and easily believable superstitions. This credulity is not anything of that early speculation of man,—that primitive beginning, the first crude attempt to exteriorize the human spirit destined to be crystallized later; but

it is a hydraheaded impulse embellished and complicated through its fermentations which would build up novel and newer religious complexes of curious legends and traditions catering for the masses and running concurrently with true religion and civilization. As a result while the empires crumble, the ghost of credulity grows strong as it is quite inseparable from the human mind. The history of religions is but the history of this prolonged and continuous struggle to regain the lost balance of true religious understanding, a remorseless and endless crusade against this ancient enemy of mankind ever since the dawn of human civilization. Prophets come, saints are born, reformers forge ahead, they preach the lofty ideals and burst forth in full blaze—and with them the religions too dress up for new Christmasses, don the dazzling ornaments of new reforms and put forth scintillating sparks of fresh vitality against the dark backgrounds of their past. But the imposing glimmers more often than not turn themselves into meaningless empty shows. The zodiac of religious life becomes dark again by the murky shadows of soulless credulity and superstitious beliefs that stalk the spheres of religious consciousness. The canker again eats into the very core. This is the process which may be observed in regard to almost all the systems of ancient religions of the world;—in the lofty religion of Hinduism degenerating into gross formalism with all its accompaniments of queer practices; in Buddhism transforming itself with its monasteries and cumbrous rites into impenetrable myth; in Taoism with its sorcery and incantations; in ancient Hebraism changing

into the worship of an indifferent God and in Christianity stooping down to the sale and purchase of the charter of redemptions by the Churches in the role of pious intermediaries between man and God.

Trends of Religious Thought : This is perhaps the way the humanity travels on and, to put it in another way, this is the disease which the religions suffer from—the disease which the classical psychologists termed as ‘the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity’ or which the materialists would designate as the ‘opiate’ of the people. By a strange decree of history, each man would invariably make his own queer religion, each sect its own sets of convictions. The same truths which make men take refuge in the temples and churches, mosques and monasteries make them live on some well chosen dogmas to meet the inborn hankering for religion. The grand realizations of the prophets defiled by credulity would soon degenerate into infallible parasitism and perversion, masquerading under the same original old label. Lulled into sleep by the blind faith, hunger for truth comes to find a complacent and idle rest upon the authority of doctrinal theology, which is not a hard-earned personal possession but a ready-made belief tailored into a fashionable brand of mechanical religion that is dogmatic in texture and uncompromising in temperament. But we can never follow a cut and dry truth, nor can we accept a ready-made popular religion which fails to fertilize our souls. We cannot live on mere forms which are divested of the spirit that helps one to become a man of divinity. In a popular religion we usually begin a life with a stock-in-trade which costs us nothing. As a result, our character remains undeveloped, will unbraced and our crude self unevolved and stunted as before. Anything which is meant to be a stimulus

to our wishful imaginations can never help us grow from within. One may hang on some credulous faith,—either soothed by ceremony or stirred by sermons; but life and character always remain as sterile and unproductive as ever. So, oftener than not, it has been the general trend that one performs one great act of faith or one great act of renunciation at the beginning of one’s religious life and there it ends for ever. All moral struggles, intellectual efforts are over; a cheap and empty life ends with a cheap ideal now and then refurbished by its cheap attainments and aspirations. Callousness and complacency creep in. Here one may even continue to pretend to be an idealist; but this idealism does never help anybody to stand up with that sublime audacity that inspires one to see God face to face.

More so is the case when the bold realizations of the prophets and saints are made regimented and compartmentalized to cater for the needs of the people in general. These prophets, when they come, always know that their realizations are far bigger than the religions themselves. Christ knew that he was bigger than Nazareth. They become fully conscious that sacrifice and spiritual daring, verification and experimentation through self-realizations that surpass the past traditions, are the very cores which keep the religions living in this world. Their spiritual serenity, calm assurance, inner strength remind us from age to age that ‘The man who loses his life shall find it’ and ‘The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church’. As Emerson would say, ‘See how the mass of men worry themselves into nameless graves, while here and there a great unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality.’ Soon after the exit of these prophets as time passes on, their portraits of compelling inspiration and unorthodox simplicity begin fading out from the minds

of the masses, and their buoyant teachings, as they lose the specific gravity, gradually become incomprehensible mythical ideals of the forgotten past. Nazareth ultimately appears to be bigger than Jesus and the Son of God is lost in the crowd. Instead of taking men up the heights of realizations and fulfilments, the ideal itself is trimmed off, and brought down to the level of a popular brand of fashionable religion with all sorts of credulity and superstitions. Instead of giving the society a call to greatness, the subsequent editions of those religions become busy in finding a happy coexistence with the needs of credulous masses. Three things which are so very important for every system of religion are: self-analysis, formulation and evangelism. Without the first, there is no guarantee of truth, without the second, no defence of truth and without the third, no propagation of truth. But where these separate functions of the three are forgotten or when one is developed at the expense of the rest, the consequences become disastrous. This is what has happened to be the fate of almost all the past systems of religion and the religious thinking in the world today needs to take the lessons of the past. This is exactly the position where sectarianism develops, false prophets thrive and dry formalism prevails and this is the reason why, to echo the words of Swami Vivekananda, we have thousand creeds after Jesus and two or three hundred sects after Śrī Caitanya today. (*The Complete Works*, Vol. VII p. 115) The realm of religion as it seems today, is somewhat similar to that of a huge market of monopolistic competitions where each is eager to sell his own popular brand of credulity, formalism and supernatural things to persons who are always prone to make speculative and windfall gains in spiritual life. Few would rest content with the truth itself and the test of

time! Nobody indeed ever wants the poverty of Christ, the noble self-sacrifice of Śaṅkara, the unsullied divinity of Sri Ramakrishna or the bold masculinity of Vivekananda! Superstition creeps in, credulity rides high and abnormality runs rampant.

Credulity and Its Newer Editions: To be more explicit, credulity may be classified under two broad categories: (i) credulities of the past and (ii) credulities of the present. Credulity of the past till the emergence of Science in the realm of religion, was essentially the credulity of faith. It was some sort of 'belief', as Tolstoy would put it, in some particular religion, accepting it to be only true, quite heedless of the ideals of other religions. While the high-browed cultured crowd would look into the essence of these early religious beliefs as consisting in mere superstitious fear arising from the uncomprehended natural phenomena and in the personification and deification of the natural forces, we would have to consider this early credulity quite in keeping with the evolution of the human society and gradual orientation of the human mind, and we might justify the trends as the early inner understandings of man's helplessness amidst the panorama of a vast infinite universe. True it is that credulity has given rise to blind fanaticism which in turn has been responsible for much bloodshed and horrified upheavals. It is also true that credulity of the masses has so often dragged down God and the prophets to its own level to fight out the issues which are not at all of religion always; but side by side there has been the saga of catholicity too. Taking a dispassionate view of the further past beyond the speculations of modern history, we can find Upaniṣadic man making flights into the superhuman levels of realizations breaking through the blind walls of finitude and senseboundedness.

Therefore if there has been the history of odious credulity lurking behind the past religious convictions of man, there have been the epics of superb catholicities too. If there have been 'Democrituses', to sneer at these pasts, there are 'Max Müllers' too to understand and defend the true message of religion far surpassing its adjunct,—the credulity. Credulities, if there had been any, were the credulities of faith—a struggle for some form tangible and positive, and not a groping like the present in the Godless void of nothingness.

The other category of credulity is rather of recent origin—the credulity of the reason of the twentieth century scientific age which posits that religion is a long outlived phase in the development of humanity and a hindrance to its further progress. The spearhead of this opinion contends that religion is but a medieval revivalism, and belief in anything but science is a sign of sheer ignorance and backwardness. This is what is even generally thought of by some men of science today and by those of the crowd who, though far from being scientific in their temperament, credulously join these men of science in asserting the outdatedness of religions. Having no truck with this old revivalism in religious endeavours these narrow-visioned men weave webs of complex ratiocinations, not knowing where and with whom to keep their faith and understanding. By their arbitrary and blind emphasis on the infallibility of science and reason—a blind faith similar to the belief in the infallibility of dogmatic religions, they still remind the sober world of the fact that science has not been able to burn down the ghost of past credulity which in its new evolved form continues to haunt mankind as before. 'A man without religion', says Tolstoy, 'is as impossible as a man without a heart. He may not know he has a religion just as a man may

not know he has a heart, but he can no more exist without a religion than without a heart.' (*Essays on Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 177)

Concept of a religion had its beginning long before philosophy and science came into being to testify to the fact that, if man had ever hesitated between the 'call of the wild' and the 'call of the Spirit', it was because he did not cease to evolve in his march towards the goal Supreme. Supple and resilient with its caravan of histories and incidents, with its evocation of the entire gamut of life, the pure passion of religious sentiments will ever stand the challenges of the future. No man who knows the splendour of scientific achievements and feels the solidarity of the methods or works with it, can remain neutral with regard to religion. He is either sure to extend his method into it or if that is not possible, will oppose it. On the other hand, no one who knows the contents of a true religion or feels the universal need of a religion, can stand idly by while the intellect of his age is slowly divorcing itself from it. No science contributes to another without receiving a reciprocal benefit. And even as the contribution of science to religion is the vindication of the naturalness of the supernatural, so the gifts of religion to science are the demonstrations of the supernaturalness of the natural. This process of the supernatural becoming natural and natural gradually transforming itself into the supernatural is sure to continue until men everywhere can realize the authority of God. The bogey of scientific thinking against religious revivalism is, therefore, a new edition of the old credulity—a novel form which may aptly be termed as cynicism and a cynic is always prone to be a pessimist having a gulf of difference with the other opposite, the optimist. The cynic is also quite different from an atheist. To

quote from Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*,—'Atheism is the vice of a few intelligent men; superstition is the vice of fools.'

There is yet another form of credulity, so frequent in the modern times, which is the emergence of a section of neo-moralists who would indulge into a sort of pious reason. In a feat of rational chivalry they like to go on without any faith whatsoever. To them religion or faith in God is a creed which, although necessary for the lower order of people, is a far outmoded thing for the cultured society. They look upon morality as something separate from religion and would like to indulge in such sayings as,—'Let us be good and moral but for that we need not seek the support of a God, be He a Being in any form or a formless all-pervading Spirit behind the movement of this material world'. Vain and irrational as these men are, they remain surrounded by a halo of so-called superstitious reason, and under the pretence that spiritual light which guides humanity is absolutely unnecessary, have raised the opaque veil of a secular philosophy before their eyes in order to hide that light. Drunk with their fragmentary knowledge they may proudly squat under the roof of such wishful mysticism but the travel of light can never be denied. The philosophy, however indispensable its advocations of professional honesty and secular morality are to them, would never be able to touch the heart of the people, any more than the chemical analysis of a picture can evoke the aesthetic effect it produces. The chasm existing between the world of quality and quantity can never be bridged by the magic of sheer reason-oriented thinking alone, whatever these boastful moral agnostics may claim to have attained. They may entrench themselves behind their obstinate dogma which is no more than the alembic of a

cultivated anguish but their minds will continue to rattle with the multitude of unanswered questions. The attitude of this pseudo sophisticated school may be aptly compared to what Turgénev humorously called as 'reversed platitudes'—an attitude often taken by people lacking in talent but desirous of attracting attention. They would, for instance, seriously assert that water is dry although every body knows that water is wet. Born of faithlessness, this new form of modern credulity is making much headway into the domain of religious thinking today from which we need to guard ourselves lest we should be drifted away befooled into the nothingness of an uncertain future. While it will be conceded that reason should not be allowed to run amuck in the sphere of religious pursuits or to manifest such a suicidal trend as it appears to do, the cultivation of a rational outlook is not in any way antagonistic to the sphere of spiritual life. Rather reason is the only instrument available to us to brush aside the credulous accretions so often entombed within us. One, in spiritual pursuits, has to learn the art of separating the corn from the chaff. But in cultivating this critical habit we may at times overdevelop it and may be delighting like puppies in tugging and tearing at anyone who comes near us and may even kill the creative instinct of mind in those in whom it is weak. Over emphasis on reason may very well give rise to a class of intellectual mercenaries—a class of doubting Thomases, whose first reaction to any claim to noble virtues is suspicion and who are always about to measure the motives and to watch for the crumbling of idols. Aristophanes in the old complained that Euripides taught the people of Athens to question everything (Aristophanes: *The Frogs*, I. 957), Goethe saw this attitude as 'Mephistopheles' '*der Geist der stets Verneint*' i.e.

'the spirit of eternal negation' and Selma Lagerlof personified it in 'the inquisitive spirit of self criticism'. To describe everything in terms of a rational mechanism, to isolate any portion from totality in support of a fashionable hypothesis might satisfy certain personal whims of a certain class and certain iconoclastic tendencies that a particular section might have, but it would seldom help discover the strong undertone of sadness beneath the placid surface of this workaday world and grasp the equilibrating wholeness of our divine existence. If we had not been careful about the superstitions in the past, we would have to be cautious about this credulity of the present—the scientific edition of the same old sadism sitting tight in the corners of our souls and tearing our being and deepest thoughts into pieces. This is perhaps the symptom which the great Russian writer Chekhov points out when he says,—'Lift the robe of our muse and you will find an empty void.' The truth can never be visualized by the one-eyed people. The true religion which is neither a blind faith nor a blind reason but a balance between the two,—a sort of right-thinking and right-understanding, can never be attained either by the hypertrophy of the overcritical zeal or by uncritical credulity. Again sometimes blind reason proves to be more disastrous than blind faith in so far as it is blind to the follies and failures or the evils and sufferings of man as also to the splendid achievements and shining virtues and the great creativities. It has a precarious foothold on the rock of discrimination but is very apt to lose its hold when the flood of emotion passes down. Rightly does Goethe say—'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard . . . nothing shall be impossible for you.'

'All ages in which unbelief, whatever its form, wins an unhappy victory, vanish and are forgotten by posterity.' (*Thuci-*

dides, 3, 83) It will be quite proper if our reason aims at detecting truth rather than falsehood, good rather than evil—for man washes this metaliferous earth to extract ore, not the rubbish in which it is imbedded. Composition of the alloy wherewith the human mind is made, may vary from age to age but the stuff of religious realization remains all the same. The purpose of all philosophy, all reason, all faith is to signify this stuff, its peculiar and particular structure, weight and gravity. The pursuit of mere blind faith may reduce it into a different thing. It can very well evaporate altogether in the pernicious heat of a negative reason. This latter one is what we face today. If perversions of reason and faith are to be regarded as the symptoms of one chronic disease,—the spiritual imbalance, our present one is a disease that reveals itself through intellectual symptoms. The world needs more than anything else to set itself right in this respect. It is human to err but to persist in one's delusion is a crying evil. The darkness which man walks in is his own shadow, caused by turning his back on the light. He who faces and walks in the light knows no darkness. This is the vision of the seers or the quest of Philosophy which the historian finds when he seeks for something that has endured.

Meaning of Religion : The reason behind all these sharp variations in the climate of religions is due to the fact that religious truth is neither a faltering speculation of the natural sciences nor a doctrine of philosophical ratiocinations. It is not the adventure of blind ancestral instincts or an entity of pale, bloodless reason. This is essentially a truth of revelation, demonstrated and verified in practical life. It is not the image we create of God, which proves God but it is the effort we make to create this image. A well known author once said,—'A catechist proclaims God to

children and Newton demonstrates Him to the wise.' The absurd and the unintelligible, (*credo quia absurdum*) and the craze for the supernatural and the unmeaning miracles which are so often mistaken to be real religion, are not what we know to be true in religion. It has been said, 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.' Religious life is, therefore, a life of God, with God and in God—an evolution of thousands of more lives in the span of one single life.

The word religion itself comes either from *religere*, *religens*, revering the God or, as has been supposed, from *religare* to bind (in obligation to higher powers). Another very common definition is—'Religion is the link between man and God.' Marquis de Vauvenargues (1715-1747) says, '*Les obligations de l'homme envers Dieu : voilà la religion*': 'Man's obligation to God : that is religion'. (*Introduction à la Connaissance de l'Esprit humain*, and *Réflexions and Maximes*) Feuerbach (1804-1872) and Schleiermacher (1768-1834) similarly acknowledge—the basis of religion to be man's consciousness of his dependence on God.' According to Benjamin Constant (1767-1830): '*La religion est le résultat des besoins de l'âme et des effets de l'intelligence*.' i.e. Religion is the outcome of the needs of the soul and of the effects of intelligence. (L. A. Feuerbach: *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, F.E.D. Schleiermacher: *Der Christ liche Glaube* and B. Constant: *De la Religion*) 'Religion', observed A. Reville, the famous theologian (1826-1906), 'is a definition of human life, based on the connection between the human soul and the mysterious spirit whose domain over the world and over himself man recognizes and with which he feels himself united.'

The traditional Indian definition of religion is far deeper than any other above

in both content and form and points to a universal practical aspect of life. The word '*dharma*' comes from the root '*dhṛ*' i.e. one which holds the life or gives a support to it. The Upaniṣads describe the quest of religion as a veritable science of the inner life of man. In the *Muṇḍaka* we read :

Tat vijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrā

ānandarūpam amṛtaṁ yad vibhāti—

'The discriminating people realize the Self existing in Its fullness everywhere through a special knowledge.' (II. ii. 7)

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* has been characterized in its colophon as '*Brahma vidyāyām yogaśāstre*'—i.e. the science of the Brahman and the scripture of *yoga*. The practical aspect of the religion becomes further reiterated when Kṛṣṇa declares in the same *Bhagavad-Gītā* :

Jñānam te'haṁ savijñānamidaṁ

vakṣyāmi aśeṣataḥ ;

Yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo'nyaj jñātavyam avasiṣyate—

'I shall tell you in full, of knowledge, speculative and practical, knowing which, nothing more here remains to be known.' (VII. 2) The observation in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* has also been the same :

Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na

medhayā na bahunā śrutena—

'The Self cannot be known through much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing.' (I. ii. 23)

Philosophical systems are not born with the introduction of this and that but these are the results of man's search for Reality—a sense of tremendous response to the extended and the unrelieved monotony around his life although the modern philosophers like Bernard Shaw and others would be content to call them as mere evolutionary appetite. But in India this quest is more inward than outward where this appetite for evolution has been regarded as the appetite for Truth and Bliss

out of which spring all the wonders of creative genius, the ineffable experiences of the mystic, the gospels of self-dedication and the chronicles of the monuments of compelling heritages. It is neither the heartless, fastidious, blind idealism ever eluding the grasps of the encounters of this visible life nor is it that search for an anxious and anguished secular dignity in deed and action bound down hand and foot to the hard materiality of history. Immensely intricate yet magnificently quiescent, it is a strange amalgam of realism and idealism which although has its beginning in sensebound world, is always destined to move beyond the gravitation of the senses. And for its true understanding we require the shedding of our intellectual as well as emotional inertia and freeing ourselves from the stock responses of credulities—be they ancient or modern. The quest of religion can never be the thing of speculation and groping. 'Religion', to repeat the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.' It is being and becoming. It is realization. A bit of this direct realization and its gentle fluctuations and noble strokes that coil up courage and calm of our inner being, that dilate our small self and wrap us in some imaginary grandeur, would be enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the heights of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires and to sully and dash out the dissembling colours of a vainglorious, shallow life and,

to echo the lines of Milton, for :

'Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.'

'Religion', therefore, 'is not a belief settled once for all in certain supernatural occurrences supposed to have taken place once upon a time, nor in the necessity of certain prayers and ceremonies ; nor is it, as the scientists suppose, a survival of the superstition of ancient ignorance which in our time has no meaning and application to life ; but religion is a certain relation of man to eternal life and to God, a relation accordant with reason and contemporary knowledge, and it is the one thing that alone moves humanity forward towards its destined aim. . . . A wise Hebrew proverb says, "The soul of man is the lamp of God." Man is a weak and miserable animal until the light of God burns in his soul.' (Tolstoy: *Essays on Religion*, Oxford University Press, p. 281)

Religion as such, being an intensely practical science, can give rise to horrible credulities from age to age if it is not followed as a science of practice and as a result false prophets may thrive, blind doctrines may grow and mad scepticisms may very well reign supreme even in this science-oriented twentieth century world of ours. The sooner we get a grasp of the hard fact, the better for us in the present as well as in the future. Credulity should never be the order of the religious endeavours of man.

REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

In 1906, while reading in the F. A. class in Calcutta, I had my first acquaintance with the life and thought of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna's *Gospel* (*Kathāmṛta*) and Swamiji's *Rāja-Yoga* came to my hand almost simultaneously. By studying these and other similar books I entered into a new realm of thought. At this time I resolved to take initiation from Swami Brahmananda and lead a religious life, but its materialization took time.

After appearing for the F. A. examination in 1907, I went to Rajsahi to join the B.A. class there. After two years' stay there, I came again to Calcutta towards the end of the summer of 1909. Swami Brahmananda, having returned from Madras, was staying in Orissa at that time. It was in 1910 that I saw him for the first time during the birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna. After the celebrations he left for Puri. At this time I went to Belur Math with my friend Sitapati (later Swami Raghavananda) and met the monks there. Since then, I started staying at Belur Math on Saturdays and Sundays. Revered Baburam Maharaj (Swami Premananda), Mahapurush Maharaj (Swami Shivananda), and other Swamis, by their love and affection, endeared me to themselves. Towards the end of 1910, when Sri Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) came to Calcutta before the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, Revered Mahapurush Maharaj introduced me to him. I felt as if I had a special relationship with Sri Maharaj and I was overwhelmed with love and devotion towards him. It was not so with regard to other Swamis. In Calcutta and at the

Belur Math I visited Sri Maharaj frequently and sometimes got the opportunity of doing a little bit of service to him. One day there was some celebration at Binod Babu's house. Many monks and devotees were present there. I was fanning Sri Maharaj with a big hand-fan. Suddenly he told me : 'Look, if the body and mind are given over to the world, the world destroys everything ; but, if given to God, He keeps everything—body and mind—in good condition.' I had a great desire to become a monk and Sri Maharaj made this ideal shine brighter before me. One day I with a friend of mine went to Belur Math to meet Sri Maharaj when I heard that he with Baburam Maharaj had gone to Balaram Mandir (Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta). We therefore went to Balaram Mandir. Sri Maharaj asked my friend to show his palm to him. Having looked at it he said : 'Lust will be of some hindrance to you, but if Sri Guru Maharaj wills it will disappear.' Baburam Maharaj loved me. He requested Sri Maharaj to look into my palm also, but he did not do so. At this I felt sad at heart and thought that my friend had some possibility of monastic life while, perhaps, I did not have that even.

A few days after this incident, as I was entering the Belur Math, Sri Maharaj's attendant saw me and said : 'Well, Sri Maharaj was telling that you would become a monk.' This gave me a lot of mental strength and, in due course, I became a monk. My friend, however, had to enter a householder's life. He is a high ranked official, but is a great devotee of the Master and a disciple of the Holy Mother.

One day Sri Maharaj went to Dakshine-

shwar with a big party in two boats. I also went with him. He was in wonderful spirits. He said, 'It is a great fortune to live at Dakshineswar even as a dog.'

When we sat with Sri Maharaj we felt as if there was a charmed circle around him and we had come within it. One day he revealed himself in a novel way to me. As he was strolling on the Math grounds, I felt as if he was a superhuman divine personality.

Sri Maharaj blessed me with initiation in 1911. A few days afterwards he went to Puri when I wrote to him that I wanted to become a monk. He asked Swami Shankarananda to write to me that if I had enough mental strength why should I not go over there. I therefore went to Sri Maharaj at Puri in October that year and joined the holy Order. During this time Sri Maharaj got the worship of *Devī Jagaddhātṛī* performed by me at the house of Atal Babu. Revered Hari Maharaj (Swami Turiyananda) was the officiating priest and Nirod Maharaj (Swami Ambikananda) was his assistant. *Kumārī-Pūjā* (worship of a virgin girl as the goddess) was also performed. Thus he helped bring into my life a deep spiritual fervour shortly after I became a monk. Some time after, Sri Maharaj asked me to go to Madras with Swami Sharvananda. Before going I requested him to impart some spiritual instructions. With great solemnity and intense compassion he said: 'Struggle! Struggle! Struggle!' This has been the keynote of my life—as if his words are still ringing in my ears.

I am reminded of a few incidents that occurred during our stay at Puri. One day Atal Babu told Swami Sharvananda: 'What kind of monks you are; you have no occult powers.' Hearing this Sri Maharaj said: 'It is easy to get occult powers, but difficult to acquire purity of mind. It is this purity of mind that matters really.'

Another day Sri Maharaj was ill—he had pain in the waist. On that day there was a special celebration at the Puri Temple. Almost all of us thought that Sri Maharaj's attendant alone would do for looking after him and went to the temple. And after passing a good deal of time there when we returned after dusk, Sri Maharaj rebuked us rather sharply for our selfishness and said in the end: 'I do not expect anything from you. Only I wish you well, and whatever I tell you is for your welfare alone.' After that I took upon myself the work of attending on Sri Maharaj at night. One night he felt very hot and asked me to open the shutters. I was new to this work of personal service and was lacking in understanding, too. So I could not think that it was necessary to close the shutters after a time. The next day Sri Maharaj felt feverish. At this I became very sad at heart. But Sri Maharaj not only did not rebuke me himself, but told others also that I was a mere boy and did not know things well. None therefore told me anything about it, but I had my lesson all right.

I went to Madras towards the close of 1911 and was there for five years. I saw Sri Maharaj there again in 1916. I had to work hard as the manager of the Madras Math. Seeing me sitting on the manager's chair for hours together, he said one day: 'Have I sent you here to do this clerk's job?' He scolded me much and took Swami Sharvananda also to task, saying, 'Without giving this boy any opportunity for study etc., you are making him do the work of a clerk.'

Viswaranjan Maharaj (Swami Hariharananda) was Sri Maharaj's personal attendant. He used to ask me to get for Sri Maharaj good gingili-oil from the market and I used to make enquiries and get the best thing available. Pointing to this, one day Sri Maharaj said: 'Have I sent you

here to enquire and find out where good gingili-oil is available?' Taking all rebukes as expressions of his love and grace, and feeling in the heart of my heart that he was mine and I was his, I used to feel happy at all this.

During this time Maharaj ordered me to pay special attention to study and contemplation and asked me to recite daily *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma*. By his grace the mind used to be in a very good state and the heart felt a sort of union with him and was filled with great elation.

Sri Maharaj was kind enough to take me to Kanya Kumari along with his party. I had never read the *Caṇḍī* (*Durgā-Saptaśatī*) ceremonially before. I didn't like the fighting and killing mentioned therein. I used to recite only the prayer hymns. Coming to know all this, Sri Maharaj scolded and asked me to recite the entire *Caṇḍī* ceremonially at least once a fortnight. He asked me to recite the *Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma* and *Caṇḍī* for three years. I did so for more than that time.

So as to avoid becoming conceited, I did not write articles or deliver lectures and refrained from religious discussions etc. One day, at the Haripad Ashrama in Travancore, Sri Maharaj commandingly said: 'Tell others what you hear and learn from us.' Again, one day at Madras, he said: 'The habit of study must be made such that you will feel ill if you miss it any day. If the mind does not remain on a high spiritual plane, at least it would remain absorbed in studies—it won't come lower.' On another occasion he said: 'Why not write one article each week?' To this I said: 'What shall I write? No ideas come.' He then said: 'Learn to think deeply and you will find that it would be difficult to cope with the onrush of ideas.' Afterwards, by the grace of my *guru*, I never suffered from want of ideas. One

morning, while we were at the Bangalore Ashrama, he showed me a few physical exercises and asked me to do them daily. I was already doing some indoor exercises and to them I added those shown by Sri Maharaj. He had told me more than once: 'Physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual progress have to go hand in hand.' After coming to Madras, Sri Maharaj himself suggested many a time that he would ordain me into *sannyāsa*. Other monks, however, advised me to go to him in advance and pray for *sannyāsa*. I went to him and like a fool said: 'Maharaj, if you consider me fit, please be kind to initiate me into *sannyāsa*.' To this he affectionately said: 'None can be considered fit for *sannyāsa*, but I would initiate you into it.'

On the day of my *sannyāsa*, I felt that Sri Maharaj was vibrating with a wonderful spiritual fervour. After the *homa* etc., when I paid my obeisance to him, he put his hand on my head and I immediately had the experience of a vast Presence—as if he, the world, and myself were merged in an infinite existence. He graciously gave me the idea of what a *guru* really was. Then I realized the truth of the hymn: 'Salutations to the *guru* who has made it possible to realize Him by whom this entire universe of movable and immovable objects is pervaded.'

That day, after nightfall, many of us sat round Sri Maharaj. Swami Sharvananda also was there. Sri Maharaj's mind was tuned very high spiritually. I thought that he would speak about spiritual practices and contemplation, but without doing so, pointing to me, he said: 'What spiritual practice will you do! Go from door to door and let people listen to the holy name of God. That in itself is a great *sādhana*.' Calling Swami Sharvananda, by name, he said: 'Sharvananda, these days I very much appreciate the attitude of Śrī Rāmānujācārya—helping

everybody hear the name of God.' That day Sri Maharaj brought into me a new inspiration and directed my thoughts into a new channel. That direction is still there. On account of this new inspiration received at Madras I began laying stress on study, meditation, etc. and started taking classes and speaking at meetings. It was later that I took to writing articles earnestly.

The construction of the new building of the Madras Math also reveals Sri Maharaj's divine power. The old Math building having been damaged, the monastery had to be shifted to a rented house. Swami Sharvananda and ourselves could not make out at all how we would build the new house for the Math. Land, of course, had been bought earlier. Coming to Madras, Sri Maharaj said that he would lay the foundation of the new building and asked Swami Sharvananda to collect money, even to take some loan, for the purpose. Help, however, came unexpectedly, and within eight months the entire building except the front hall was made ready for use. Sri Maharaj, after his return from Bangalore, and shortly after our initiation into *sannyāsa*, consecrated the new Math building.

On that day—the day of dedication of the new Math—I was performing the evening *ārati* (service) of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Maharaj was standing a little behind me. While performing the *ārati* I felt as if everything was filled by a great Presence. I perceived that great Presence in all the pictures and in Sri Maharaj as well as everyone present as I was doing the *ārati*. Even now, when I try to perform *ārati* I get that feeling. This is the special blessing of Sri Maharaj. That same evening, we were sitting in front of Sri Maharaj on the terrace of the rented building. Sri Maharaj said: 'I fervently told Sri Ramakrishna: "They are just boys. How would

they build a new house? Thou shouldst kindly make everything possible." And so, you see, by His grace, the new building has come up.'

At Madras I used to be preoccupied with various activities. I used to get very little time for studies or meditation. As soon as Sri Maharaj arrived at Madras, he understood that I needed a change. He wished that I should leave Madras and go to Bangalore. But I had no desire to go to Bangalore. But Maharaj knew what was good for me. So he said one day: 'Fool! you don't understand your own interest! There is no need for you to stay at Madras any more—proceed to Bangalore.'

Earlier, Tulasi Maharaj (Swami Nirmalananda) had requested Sri Maharaj to send me to Bangalore. I had heard that Maharaj had also more or less agreed to it. In obedience to Sri Maharaj's wish, I went to Bangalore in the summer of 1917 and stayed there for a year.

In early summer of 1917 Sri Maharaj left for Puri. A few days later I, too, left for Bangalore. While there I was given to much spiritual practices and religious studies. At the Bangalore Ashrama, I used to conduct the Sunday classes, too. In late summer of the same year, I had enteric fever and had a severe burning sensation all over the body. I was admitted into a hospital. During this time, there was an influenza epidemic on. One morning an old man was brought in and placed in a bed next to mine. He had double pneumonia and was in a serious condition; by evening all was over with him.

I was experiencing great pain. But my mind was very clear then. There was no fear of death. But I did feel that it would be difficult to bear any increase in suffering. Death would have been more welcome. When such a thought arose in my mind, I had a vision of Sri Maharaj. He said:

'How can you die? You have yet to do Sri Ramakrishna's work!' Saying so, he disappeared. My mind was filled with a new fervour. Tears began to roll down my eyes profusely. There was no question of any fear of death; on the other hand, a wonderful peace and a sense of resignation came over me. And the disease, too, took a turn for the better.

After spending more than a year at Bangalore and another year of spiritual practices at various places in the Madras Presidency, I went to Bhubaneshwar to meet Sri Maharaj at the end of December, 1919. There I got the rare privilege of spending a few days in his holy company. The construction of the Bhubaneshwar Math was nearing completion at that time. It was during this period that, one evening, Sri Atal Maitra of Puri arrived with his first wife. The old man was very much downcast, filled with sorrow. Sri Maharaj asked Swami Varadananda to sing. Varadananda sang the song beginning:

O mind, make thy refuge the feet of the
Divine Mother who dispels all fears.

Hearing the song, and more than that by having the *darśana* of Sri Maharaj and hearing his words, the old man's face brightened and he was filled with joy. We all felt very happy at this transformation.

After a few days' stay at Bhubaneshwar, Sri Maharaj sent me to Calcutta with Swami Gokulananda who was sick. From Calcutta I went to Belur Math, where I spent a few months. During this time, in 1920, before Swamiji's birth anniversary, Sri Maharaj arrived at Belur. We all used to go and sit in his room and meditate and chant various hymns.

My last *darśana* of Sri Maharaj was at Varanasi in the year 1921, a few days before Swamiji's birth anniversary. Then I was staying with Revered Hari Maharaj. Sri Maharaj brought about a new spiritual current in the Varanasi Sevashrama and

Advaita Ashrama. At this time, he gave me, too, much spiritual inspiration. One day he enquired about my spiritual practices. I said: 'I feel as if there is no inner awakening. So I am not getting peace of mind. We have been born with such bad *samskāras* (mental impressions) that they prove to be hurdles to spiritual growth.' Maharaj replied: 'Don't think that way. Practise *japa* at dead of night. Do *puraścaraṇa* (a ritual involving a particular number of *japa*). Inner awakening will come of its own accord.'

Another day I went to him, feeling restless in mind. Seeing me approaching, he got up and came towards me and gave me many instructions within a short time. He said: 'Your mind becomes restless only because you don't want to do what I tell you to do.' Placing his palm on my head, he blessed me and filled my heart with peace.

It was Sri Maharaj's desire that I should go to Mayavati and take charge of *Prabuddha Bharata*. But he did not tell me anything himself. It was Revered Sudhir Maharaj (Swami Suddhananda) and Nirmal Maharaj (Swami Madhavananda) who told me several times about going to Mayavati. But I was disagreeable to this.

One morning, while I was with Revered Hari Maharaj, busy attending on him, I felt as if something was breaking down within me and a wail coming up from the depth of my mind. Tears also poured down the eyes. The more I wiped, the more the tears came. Along with it I noticed an attitude of self-surrender coming over me. I understood that it was the play of Sri Maharaj. He was graciously removing the obstinacy and the obstacles of my mind. By evening my mind settled down.

After this, one morning, as I went to pay my obeisance to him, he said: 'Look, they

all wish that you should go to Mayavati and take charge of *Prabuddha Bharata*.' He had already broken my stiffness. I therefore without any hesitation said: 'Maharaj, if you order, I would surely go.' Sri Maharaj was much pleased with my reply and blessed me. After this it was settled that I would go to Mayavati. One morning, after prostrating before him, I along with Sudhir Maharaj, Nirmal Maharaj, and other monks sat near him. Sri Maharaj asked me at the very outset: 'How are your spiritual practices going on?' In reply, I said: 'There is much work to do. I do not get enough time.' To this he said: 'It's wrong to think there is no time because of work. It is due to the restlessness of the mind that one feels like that.' And this opened the flood-gates of Sri Maharaj's speech. With great feeling he said: 'One should prepare the mind by doing work and worship together.' These instructions are there in the 'Work and Worship' chapter of the *Eternal Companion*. These were addressed particularly to me. On that day he established a special relationship of love between Nirmal Maharaj, other brother monks and myself. He said: 'Just as Nirmal is dear to me so are you and others too.' When I think that all are dear to Sri Maharaj, then I also feel that all are dear to me as well. Sri Maharaj regarded his own disciples and those of the Holy Mother equally dear to him. He used to say that all had come to do Sri Guru Maharaj's and Swamiji's work. One day, pointing specially to me, he said: 'By doing their work in this spirit, bondage can never come. Rather through it will come all progress—spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical. Surrender yourself at their feet; offer body and mind to them; be as a slave unto them.' This and other instructions of Sri Maharaj have become the stay of my life.

I had a desire to talk some day to Sri

Maharaj with a very open heart. I was nursing a bit of wounded feeling against him. When he had gone to Madras he told me that he would take me with him to Bengal on his return, but instead he sent me to Bangalore. Again, towards the end of 1919, when I went to Bhubaneswar, he did not allow me to stay with him for long and sent me to Bengal. For all these I had a complaining heart and was feeling unquiet within. I was seeking for an opportunity of speaking out my mind to him, and one day it came. On Sri Maharaj's auspicious birthday in 1921 *Kālī-Pūjā* was performed. I planned that I would see him the next evening when others would go to the bank of the Gaṅgā for the immersion of the image. I did not, however, tell him about it. That evening I went to his room. Swami Visuddhananda was sitting near him. Peta Puri was also there. As soon as Sri Maharaj saw me he, like a child, exclaimed to Peta Puri: 'Look, what a *yogin* I am!' I learnt that a little while ago he had asked Peta Puri to see if I had come; he knew that I would.

That day we had a lot of talk. Sri Maharaj said that he knew that I had a desire to move and visit places when I went to Bhubaneswar and, therefore, sent me to Bengal. He also knew that this tendency in me would soon disappear. In order, therefore, to get this done earlier, he had sent me away hurriedly. I felt ashamed when I found how deep was his concern in all that he did for me. He removed all my mental depressions and made my mind clean. As a result of it a new bond of inner relationship was created between him and myself. Shortly after this Sri Maharaj went away to Belur, leaving behind within my mind his divine image firmly established. The spiritual fervour he instilled in me and the ideas of piety and service he showed me while

at Madras and Varanasi still continue to inspire me. He is even now, through his grace, bringing to me in a subtle way new light and fresh inspiration. As the days are

passing, I am understanding the significance of Sri Ramakrishna's words that it is God Himself who comes in the form of *guru*.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE WIT—2

DR. S. P. SENGUPTA

The ever-joyful philosopher that Sri Ramakrishna was, he would always have joy. His disciples, particularly Naren often subjected him to umpteen tests, and the Master was never displeased. His face was lit with a broad smile. 'You still disbelieve me! Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are now in this frame. But this time they have come *incognito*.' Often did he clothe serious thought in playful, half-serious banter and raillery. Often was he flippant. But his flippancy was sometimes a cultivated art. Scintillating wit, exchange of repartees and tart rejoinders have enormously heightened the effect of his speeches. He thus let in upon his disciples the breath of a larger air. He pressed upon them in his witty vein all the valued things; and their response was ecstatic. They found in him the dearest friend in sorrow and in joy; in moods grave or gay they found in him the wisest and noblest man with whom they could live in closest and most fruitful intimacy. And this intimacy was there because the Master was never stand-offish, and because his morality was always enlivened with wit and humour.

While speaking of Narendranath Sri Ramakrishna said that he was Ramakrishna's father-in-law's place. What he meant was that Naren was essentially of the masculine type, while he was of the feminine type. A plain statement is aglint with wit. Sri Ramakrishna was taking his

food at noon. Balaram Basu and a few other disciples were attending upon him. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna became a little facetious about marriage. 'Why did I marry?' asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'I cannot keep the clothes on my person. Why on earth should I have a wife?'

Balaram smiled and waited for an answer. Sri Ramakrishna picked up a little food from the plate and said, 'Yes, it is for this reason that I have married. Were I a bachelor, who could cook for me?' Obviously this was not the reason. Sri Ramakrishna was then in his lighter vein, and that was all. We all relish the dance of a child. But when a man past his middle age dances, it is laughable rather than entertaining. Sri Ramakrishna gave the lie to this popular misconception. He danced, and sang and entertained everybody. Girish Chandra Ghosh perhaps did not exaggerate when he said that he had never before enjoyed such a heart-warming dance.

At Kamarpukur the women used to go to Haldarpukur to bring water. Their main attraction was, however, Sri Ramakrishna himself. They would listen to his talk for an hour or so and then leave. Sri Ramakrishna said to them: 'The Gopīs used to meet Kṛṣṇa on different occasions. They would go to the river and bring water and meet Kṛṣṇa. In the twilight they

would meet him when Kṛṣṇa came from the pasture; at night also they would meet. Are you meeting me at the bathing time?' They laughed and laughed.

The smiles of Sri Ramakrishna had a beauty of their own. He liked the God-intoxicated people to come to him. They formed a fraternity. Sri Ramakrishna compared them with the hemp-addicts. A hemp-addict will transmit the hubble-bubble to a friend. As a matter of fact, he can fully relish it only when he shares it with others. In much the same way the God-intoxicated man would be happy only when he is in the company of the devotees. Mahendra Gupta saw Sri Ramakrishna, and a new world was opened unto him. He came on the following day; for the charm of the Master was irresistible. 'Look here, he has come again,' said Sri Ramakrishna to his disciples. And then came another comparison. 'A peacock was given a dose of opium at 4 o'clock, and next day at that precise hour he came for another dose'. The Master and the disciples laughed. But Mahendra Gupta could not then reconcile himself to religion and laughter. The traditional belief was that a religious teacher should be as wise as Nestor and as gloomy as an owl. Sri Ramakrishna realized what was in the back of Mahendra Gupta's mind. And readily came another piece of witticism. 'Look here, he is aged. And, therefore, he chooses to be grave'. Mahendra Gupta was then only twenty-seven years old.

Keshav Sen and Vijoy Krishna Goswami were once fast friends. Vijoy had an unimpeachable loyalty to Keshav. For various reasons, and they need not be stated here, Vijoy had seceded from 'Nava Bidhān'. They quarrelled with each other, but to Sri Ramakrishna they were as devoted as ever. They were like two erring brothers, watched by an affectionate father. Keshav and Vijoy were both feeling a

little uncomfortable; and the Master watched and smiled. He composed their differences with his witty simile. Turning to Keshav he said, 'Vijoy is here. Your dispute is like that of Śiva and Rāma, and Rāma's preceptor is Śiva. They quarrelled and fought; but their stooges—the ghosts and monkeys have gone on chattering. Keshav and Vijoy laughed, and the clouds were lifted. And then followed series of similes, all equally witty directed to one end—the reconciliation of the two erring sons. It sometimes happened, the Master said, that the mother and the daughter would observe vows on 'Tuesdays'. They forget that if the mother does it, she will pray not for her welfare alone, but of her daughter also.

Some Brāhmas, Sri Ramakrishna feared, cared more for ostentation. He must reprove them. And hence he became a little satirical. Satire, it is known to all, is a very delicate operation, and no man unless in possession of a thorough training, a clear purpose and a sound knowledge of moral anatomy, should trust himself with it. Sri Ramakrishna may not have had a thorough training in this regard, but he had truth as his unerring guide. At every moment Sri Ramakrishna found mockery and the contradiction even among religious leaders. An illustration may be given. Once Sri Ramakrishna went to Brāhma Samāj to see how they said their prayers. The gentleman who conducted the prayer dwelt at length upon God's opulence, and then suggested that they should meditate. All of them closed their eyes; and after only two minutes they all opened their eyes. Sri Ramakrishna, the symbol of truth, was not willing to let things lying down. With his characteristic wit he said, 'Look here, Keshav, your meditation reminds me of ...' Keshav and his associates were on their tenterhooks to know how Sri Ramakrishna had reacted to their

prayer. And Sri Ramakrishna concluded : 'You remind me of the flock of monkeys that sit upon the trees. They seem to be deeply absorbed in thought. It is nothing religious. They are thinking of the gourds, pumpkins, bananas or brinjals in the orchards, they would at a convenient hour, pounce upon'. Keshav and others laughed.

Sri Ramakrishna in his search for truth spared none—not even Narendranath. Naren was singing a devotional song, meaning of one of the lines of which was :

'Ceaselessly shouldst thou meditate on God'.

Sri Ramakrishna knew that neither the singer nor others who had the song on their lips, could always ceaselessly pray to God. Then came a retort sharp but nevertheless witty :

'Pray to God only twice a day.'

And all the house was agog in laughter.

Sri Ramakrishna could say all these things to those he loved. He who loves will chastise well. And that is why he could say to Vijoy Krishna Goswami, 'I am glad that you are almost intoxicated while dancing. But I fear at times that the roof will give in.' (Vijoy was quite obese.)

Narendranath would often come to Dakshineswar to see the Master. But the ties at home could not be easily snapped. Naren, Sri Ramakrishna thought, should be his constant companion. But for some-time that was not to be. So came a witty story. Once a ghost was left alone. Even ghosts are social beings. And hence the ghost was frantically moving about in search of a companion. Whenever somebody died, he would rush there, thinking that the new-born ghost would be his friend. But as ill luck would have it, each ghost had his deliverance either because he could dip in the holy Gaṅgā or because there was oblation. The ghost was thus

doomed to a life of solitude. Sri Ramakrishna compared himself to that ghost.

Some times Sri Ramakrishna would behave like a child, and that would cause the merriment of his disciples. One day he told a boy, 'I am a middle-aged person, and yet like a boy I cannot wear my clothes. Can you be stark naked and move about?' The boy replied, 'Yes, I can do it only in your presence'. Once at night Sri Ramakrishna left his bed and asked some of his disciples to go to the bank to see the river in spate. The disciples, a little sophisticated, put on their clothes and went to the river-side to see that the flood had receded. Sri Ramakrishna asked, 'How did you enjoy the flood?' And when told that they had missed it, he remonstrated with them, 'You brothers-in-law, (brother-in-law is an abusive term in Bengali, but to Sri Ramakrishna it was a term of endearment) do you expect the flood to wait till your arrival? Why did not you put off your clothes like me?'

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna said, 'As a bird called *cātaka* drinks only rain water, so also a truly devout person relies on God alone'. Narendranath butted in, 'Sir, that a *cātaka* drinks only rain water is only a myth'. Naren has said this, and so it set him thinking. Naren one day pointed out to him a small bat, drinking the water of the river. Sri Ramakrishna laughed and said, 'That is not a *cātaka*. I won't believe you any more'!

Sri Ramakrishna had an attack of cancer, and was under the treatment of Dr. Mahendra Sarkar. One day the doctor was told that the illness had taken a turn for the worse. 'What have you taken today?' The doctor demanded. 'Potato, green banana, brinjal and one or two pieces of cauliflower', said Sri Ramakrishna.

To save his face perhaps the doctor exclaimed, 'My goodness gracious! you have

taken cauliflower. How many pieces have you taken?’

‘Not even one’, replied Sri Ramakrishna. The doctor solemnly gave his verdict: ‘The cauliflower juice has aggravated your illness’. To buttress up his case the doctor narrated a story of his own life. Once he had an attack of bronchitis. The illness persisted, and on an enquiry he came to learn that the cow was made to take a large quantity of *māṣkarai*, i.e. a kind of pulse which normally causes cold. The doctor took milk of that cow, and hence his attack of bronchitis.

Sri Ramakrishna, not so easily to be beaten, narrated a story of a person who passed by a tamarind tree and had acidity.

Once Adhar Sen, another devotee introduced his friend Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna punned and said that Bankim was also ‘*Bankim*’, i.e. crooked. In answer to Bankim’s invitation to his village, Sri Ramakrishna narrated a story. Bankim said that in his village, the people often said their prayers to God. Sri Ramakrishna said, once a man with a few of his friends went to a goldsmith’s shop to sell some ornaments. The goldsmith and his assistants looked like Vaiṣṇavas. They warmly welcomed the man and his friends. One of the assistants very devoutly said, ‘Keśava, Keśava’. Obviously he was remembering the name of Kṛṣṇa, one of whose innumerable names is Keśava. The old goldsmith as devout, cried out, ‘Gopāla, Gopāla’. One assistant said passionately, ‘Hari, Hari’; and the third assistant said, ‘Hara, Hara’. As a matter of fact, the goldsmith and his associates were crooks. The first assistant was simply asking the goldsmith, quite an experienced man, to give his candid opinion about the customers. ‘Keśava’, means in Bengali, ‘Who are they?’ The goldsmith, hoary with age and experience, said ‘Gopāla’, which in this

context would mean, a herd of cows, i.e. the customers are no more intelligent than the cattle, and hence easily gullible. The second assistant said, ‘Hari, Hari’. In fact, he was seeking the permission to rob them. And the last assistant, as if on behalf of the goldsmith, said ‘Hara, Hara, i.e. let us rob them.’

‘Don’t go so far’, Sri Ramakrishna advised Narendranath. Sri Ramakrishna asked Naren, ‘You know, my dear Naren, you will often be rallied by the worldly people. What will you do then?’

‘I shall look upon them as barking dogs’. Sri Ramakrishna then said laughing, ‘Don’t go so far’.

Sri Ramakrishna did not know even the ABC of the English alphabet. Naren in his early period sometimes even called him an ignoramus. Sri Ramakrishna, amused at the child’s petulance, said, ‘I am not as ignorant as Naren thinks. I know the alphabet’. Later Sri Ramakrishna asked Naren, ‘Do you like to read any more?’ The reformed child replied, ‘I want to unlearn every thing’.

Sri Ramakrishna who knew much more than the most knowing man would still have a hearty laugh at the expense of the people who knew English. He would often ask Naren and Mahendra Gupta to discuss certain things in English. Naren was going home. ‘Come often’, Sri Ramakrishna said, ‘as a newly married groom’. His estimate of Naren is remarkable. ‘There are some cows that lie down, when touched on the tail. Some, on the other hand, frisk and gambol. They are very spirited. Naren belongs to the latter category’. How vivid and yet how witty!

While describing the different manifestations of Kālī, the Mother, Sri Ramakrishna said to Keshav Sen that Kālī was like the mistress of a house. When the world comes to an end, the Mother preserves the seeds of creation in the same

way as the mistress of the household preserves and stows away the foam of the sea, seeds of pumpkins, cucumbers and gourds. It appears as if the similes and metaphors are all drawn from nature. They smell of the earth.

'The mind, has a wonderful plasticity', Sri Ramakrishna said. You dye your mind in blue, and it will be blue. A man, having a smattering in English, should always speak in English—'foot, fut, it, mit'; while a man versed in Sanskrit, would chant verses. Sri Ramakrishna taught a supreme lesson in his witty manner.

Strait is the gate to heaven. Religious discourses do not appeal to some. They come to Dakshineswar for many other reasons. Their friends are listening to Sri Ramakrishna with rapt attention; and what can they do now? Sri Ramakrishna recalled how they found no interest in such discourses, and decided to take rest in the boats. And when Sri Ramakrishna could realize that they were utterly indifferent to God, he would ask them to study the architectural pattern of the temple.

Samādhi is the final state. Once a man has attained that state, which is something more than trance or ecstasy, he ceases to be active. To explain this Sri Ramakrishna had recourse to two similes, equally apt and witty. At a banquet where the brāhmins are feted there is at the beginning a lot of noise, which dwindles as 'luchis' or fried wafers and curry are being served. When curd is served the noise has been reduced to the irreducible minimum. After the dinner all fall asleep, and there is complete silence. The sleep is compared to the state of *samādhi*. A bride does all the household chores. But once she is pregnant, the mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law do all the works themselves and ask her to enjoy as much rest as possible. The child is born, and the mother completely renounces work. This

renunciation of work and *samādhi* are alike.

Samādhi is possible only to one who has very much spiritually advanced—one has the communion with the over-soul. And so when somebody asked Sri Ramakrishna to teach him *samādhi*, it only excited people's laughter. Religious people are normally selfless. But the worldly-minded people, Sri Ramakrishna insisted, are utterly selfish. You ask them to bring sweetmeat from the confectioner's shop, they will bring it grudgingly and lick it as much as possible on the way.

One who loves God does not believe in any compromise with things mundane. He is like a cultivator who is determined to sink a canal connecting his field with the river. He goes on digging from morning till evening. His daughter comes and asks him to go home for his meal. He declines. Then comes his wife. And the cultivator is still adamant. 'I must let in the water and then stop'. After day's hard toil, he succeeds. But another cultivator is at work. And as soon as the wife is coaxing him, gone is his resolution. 'Since you have come, I must submit,' says the hen-pecked husband. And his field could not be irrigated.

Sri Ramakrishna hated cant and sham. He did not like everybody to wear saffron robes. First deserve, and then desire. And when a man with a mendicant's robes came to him, he blurted out, 'I have renounced *Caṇḍī* in favour of the drum.' Formerly one used to chant the verses of the caṇḍī but now he has become a drummer. Once Sri Ramakrishna was invited to attend a prayer conducted by Keshav Sen. Keshav sat on the pulpit and prayed, 'O Lord, let us be drowned in the river of devotion'. 'River of devotion' is a telling metaphor, but to Sri Ramakrishna, it was words, words, and words, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. And pat came the reprimand sharp and witty. 'Why should

you all be drowned? If you are drowned, what will happen to those behind the curtain? (He was referring to the women-folk) So it would be better if instead of being drowned, you dip in the river of devotion and come back to the shore'.

Keshav asked Sri Ramakrishna to tell more about Brahman. One who knows Brahman cannot organize any party or junta. As soon as Keshav realized it, he asked Sri Ramakrishna not to discuss it any longer. Sri Ramakrishna narrated the incident with sufficient unction and gusto. He loved those who cared more for devotion rather than a party. Narendranath quoted from Hamilton, 'A learned ignorance is the end of philosophy and the beginning of Religion'. For religion is a matter of faith and conviction. Asked to translate the remark of Hamilton, Narendranath made a Bengali rendering. Sri Ramakrishna, who did not know even the ABC of English said in joy, 'Thank you,' in English.

'Beware of a saint who carries baggages with him', Sri Ramakrishna sounded the note of warning. 'I have seen such saints at Dakshineswar', said Sri Ramakrishna, 'some of them are sifting lentils, some are sewing and darning their clothes, and some are waxing eloquent about how a rich man had feted the mendicants.' 'That rich man has spent a lac of rupees to entertain us', said the mendicants, 'he has catered all sorts of sweets'.

Those who have not realized God do not know what a source of joy God is. Such persons hold the wrong end of the telescope and give their imaginary conception of God. They are like a man who once said that in his uncle's house there were many horses in the stall. Little did he know that horses were in the stable and not in the stall.

Mahima Charan Chakrabarty lived at Cossipur and often visited the Master. He

could not merge his ego, conscious that he was of his learning. He spared no pains to give people the impression that he was charitable, noble and highly religious. He had an excellent collection of books in Sanskrit and English. Once Narendranath called on him and asked, 'Well, Mr. Chakravarty, I suppose you have read all these books.' With scholarly humility, he said that he did. Narendranath rummaged the books, and found that most of the books were with pages uncut. Greatly amused, he asked, 'How is it that the pages are uncut?' Mahima Charan with his ready wit replied, 'You will appreciate, my dear brother, that many people borrowed my books never to return them. I have, therefore, got fresh copies of those books.' Mahima Charan would often come to Sri Ramakrishna and sit on a tiger-skin. He would, however, leave it behind. When Sri Ramakrishna was asked whom it belonged to, he said laughing, 'It is Mahim's. Do you know why he has left it behind? People will enquire, and I shall naturally say that it belongs to Mahim, and everybody will realize what a saintly person he is'. At times Sri Ramakrishna would tell him, 'You are a great scholar. You must give a religious discourse.' Everybody understood that the Master was laughing in his sleeves. On one occasion Mahima Charan came and Sri Ramakrishna extended a hearty welcome to him. The audience appreciated the witticism and had a hearty laugh, and Mahima Charan did not understand that he was the target. 'What a wonder! Only canoes and barges can come here. But we have here in our midst an ocean-liner. How could this miracle happen? O yes, it is the month of July, and the river is in spate'. And after sometime Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Once you used to entertain people. But now you don't invite anybody. Perhaps your budget is upset!' What Sri Rama-

krishna meant was that Mahima Charan's charity was for publicity, and once that was attained, there would be no point in spending any more. There is no denunciation. It is only an effective use of irony.

And this irony sometimes became a bludgeon. Told that after Keshav Sen's passing away, there was a rumpus about his successor, Sri Ramakrishna jocularly asked, 'Well Pratap, those who are kicking up a row about it are all Tom, Dick and Harry. Pratap and Amrita are like conchs that blow, but others are conchs without any sound'.

Pratap, Sri Ramakrishna conceded, though superior to his colleagues, was nevertheless egoistical. Ramakrishna narrated a humorous story to illustrate his point. A man had a hut on the top of the mountain. A storm began to blow, and the hut was tottering. Anxious to keep it in tact, the man prayed to the god of the wind. The god of the wind did not listen. The man then hit upon a plan. Hanumān is the son of the god of wind, and so he prayed, 'O God of wind, see that the hut does not topple down, for it belongs to your son, Hanumān'. The hut was violently shaking. Then the man said, 'It is Lakṣmaṇ's hut.' That was also of no avail. Then he went on crooning, 'It is Rāma's hut.' Now the hut gave in. Self-preservation is the first law of nature ; and therefore, the man ran out of the hut and concluded, 'Down with the blasted brother-in-law's hut.'

Everybody is not fit to be a religious teacher. And Sri Ramakrishna was never tired of warning those who spoke with pontifical solemnity, although they had no realization of God. God Himself marks out a few, just a few, of such persons amidst the crowd of millions. A retired subdivisional officer thought that since Sri Ramakrishna who did not have even the three R's could be such a great religious

teacher, there was no earthly reason why he could not. And the laughing philosopher told an anecdote. At Kamarpukur there is a large tank known as Halderpukur, and people used to commit nuisance on its bank. Next morning the villagers intending to have their bath came only to find the bank desecrated, giving out an offensive smell. They fulminated, and the foul play continued. At last a Government officer came there and put up a notice. 'Do not commit nuisance.' And the filthy habit of the people was stopped.

Pratap Hajra was a sanctimonious hypocrite. He always showed off his religious disposition. Sri Ramakrishna must prick the bubble of self-complacency. Hajra, Sri Ramakrishna said, went as far as Rishikesh. Sri Ramakrishna could not go so far. Kites and vultures fly at a very high altitude, but all the while their attention is riveted upon the carcasses. Again Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Hajra is spiritually advanced, but the poor fellow has a few domestic troubles. He has to look after his children, he has also run into debt, and he has to liquidate it. He is exactly like an aunt about whom, her nephew said optimistically, "My aunt is radically cured ; there are just a few ailments"'. Hajra, Sri Ramakrishna said, was the only man in the temple worth talking about, while Sri Ramakrishna was a nonentity. Sri Ramakrishna laughed, and Hajra's pettiness was blown away like the leaf in a storm.

Sri Ramakrishna has been charged by the prudes and prigs with rusticity. These people care for urbanity and miss the truth. Sri Ramakrishna saw that at the opportune moment alone would the supreme truth dawn upon us. The child went to bed and said to his mother, 'Please, mum, wake me up when I have motion.' The mother replied, 'Dear child, your motion will wake you.' A little rustic, who will deny ? But how telling, how unsophis-

ticated, how effective, and how direct in its appeal !

Be humble before the Almighty God, was Sri Ramakrishna's refrain. Some are proud of beauty, some of wealth, some of the dignity of office. They are all dressed in brief, little authority. Little do they realize that the paths of glory lead but to the grave. Sri Ramakrishna struck a note of warning not like a clergy, clad in black. A drunkard, Sri Ramakrishna said, went to the *pūjā* pandal and watched the rich and gaudy array of the image. 'O mother,' said the drunkard, 'however well you may dress yourself, you are destined to be immersed in the Gaṅgā only two or three days hence.'

If you want to meet God, meet Him face to face. Books, science and scriptures are of no avail when one realized God. God is like a *Barabābu*, the supreme head of the office. What is the point in flattering the petty clerks and valets? Once you pick up acquaintance with the boss, the clerks, servants and porters will salute you.

Sri Ramakrishna sometimes cut jokes at his own expense. 'Money is no better than soil' was his refrain, and, therefore, he threw money into the river as a thing of no consequence. Later, however, he thought that Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Fortune might take it amiss, since he had flagrantly flouted her. So he prayed to Lakṣmī, 'Mother, you should be enshrined in my heart.' Then he compared himself to a man who had propitiated Bhagavatī. The Goddess said, 'You ask for a boon.' And he replied, 'Mother, grant me a boon so that I may dine with my grandson on a plate of gold.' In one boon he got a grandson and worldly affluence.

Girish Ghosh marked that Mahendra Gupta was a patient listener, but was mostly tongue-tied. 'We are all babblers',

asked Girish, 'but why should Mahendra Gupta keep mum?'

Sri Ramakrishna defended his disciple and quoted a doggeral that amused everybody. You should be guarded against several types of persons. They are babblers who talk incessantly; the extroverts, who do not talk at all, and even when a diver probes deep in his mind he cannot find anything in the unfathomable mind; the persons who sanctimoniously flaunt basil leaves on their ears; the woman who has drawn a long veil pretending to be a devoted wife, but is actually a courtesan; and the stagnant waterpool covered with duck-weeds; if a man bathes there he is sure to be down with typhoid. But Mahendra Gupta, though taciturn is not to be dreaded.

Arid scholarship is no good, contended Sri Ramakrishna. The almanac has forecast that there should be a heavy shower, but even when hard-pressed, the almanac does not yield a drop of water.

'Religious teachers like Nārada are selfless', said Sri Ramakrishna. They come to the world to help others. They prize their fellowmen above themselves. But there are teachers who are extremely selfish. They will have a hearty meal and then wipe their mouths clean so that nobody may have even the ghost of an idea that they had had their dinner.

Dr. Mahendra Sarkar had the profoundest regard for the Master as a man, but he could not reconcile himself to the idea that he could be God, or even His incarnation. Girish on the contrary, was poles apart. He believed and wanted everybody else to believe that Sri Ramakrishna was God Himself. Mahendra Sarkar inculcated upon himself as upon others scientific scepticism, which may be euphemistically called disinterestedness. He did not believe that there were more things in heaven and earth than philosophy or for

that matter, science could ever dream of. The sceptic should be a believer. Sri Ramakrishna laughed and said, 'How can he believe in the incarnation of God? There is no such reference in his science treatises.' And readily comes an appropriate simile, aglow with wit. One man came and said, 'Look here, I went to that locality and found Mr. X's house being razed to the ground'. The man to whom it was related, refused to believe it. He was an educated person, and used to swear by the newspaper. If it was reported in the press, it could be believed. There was, however, no such reference in the newspapers. Dr. Mahendra Sarkar enjoyed the story, and the hard heart was thawing.

'Mechanically uttering the name of God will not do', said Sri Ramakrishna. You utter the name of God, and you are cleansed, but you must have the strength of mind to stick tenaciously to your ideal. You take a holy dip in the Gaṅgā and you are sanctified. But your sanctity is a passing phase. Sri Ramakrishna wittily remarked, 'As soon as you dip into the Gaṅgā, all your sins perch on the tree. You come to the shore, and the sins swoop upon you'.

Money is meant to be spent, and spent for the good of man. Extravagance is not good, but economy is often synonymous with miserliness. Mani Mullick, a devotee, was a well-to-do man, but he would think twice before spending a farthing. Sri Ramakrishna jestingly said, 'Well Mani, Rakhal was telling me that in his village there was an acute scarcity of water. You can very well sink a tank there. You have plenty of money. But I am told, the Telis (a particular caste) are miserly.' Mani Mullick was a Teli by caste. It would be the furthest from the truth if one thinks that Sri Ramakrishna was hitting anybody for his caste. Sri Ramakrishna had no casteism. His mind had the expanse of

the sky or the sea. He loved everybody. It was just his way of putting things. The sting would always be sweetened by the magic touch of love.

Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples were invited by Suren Mitra, the other devotee on the occasion of *Annapurnā Pūjā* at his house. It often happens that the shoes which are kept outside the temple are stolen by the light fingered people. Sri Ramakrishna asked Rakhal Maharaj in a code language, which he alone could understand. 'O-Rā-Ju-Ā'? Apparently it was a cryptograph, which meant, 'O-Rā', i.e. O Rakhal, 'Ju', i.e. shoes, and 'Ā', i.e. are they still there? O, Rakhal, are the shoes still there? God's ways are like those of a child.

Hatha-yoga sets much store by the body, and cares little for the mind or the soul. And naturally Ramakrishna had scant regard for the *Hatha-yogins*. What are they, if not magicians? Once a magician while displaying his magical feats, introduced his tongue in the palate. He was then like a man petrified. People thought that he was dead, and was, therefore, buried. Years rolled by, and the cemetery was broken, and the man, for all practical purposes dead, was exhumed, and the first words he uttered were '*hocus pocus*' the professional cry of the magicians.

Man is all the while running after the will-o'-the-wisp. God is always eluding his grasp. Such a man is like one who at midnight felt an irresistible desire to smoke. He went to his neighbour's house and after repeated attempts, succeeded in waking him. 'Why do you wake me up at this unearthly hour?' asked the neighbour. And the reply was, 'I have come for a little light. I want to smoke'. The neighbour laughed and said, 'Why did you not notice that you had a lantern with you all the while?'

We are all smatterers, and yet we are

always vain and conceited. We are, Sri Ramakrishna pointed out, like an ant who had been to a mountain of sugar. He carried only one grain of sugar, for that was all he could carry, and thought that on the following day he could carry the rest.

Even for the humblest of his disciples Sri Ramakrishna had unbounded love. For to him, nobody was humble. He would never console them in distress in the conventional manner. Narayan, a school-going teen-ager would often come to the Master; and invariably he would be beaten by his philistine parents. 'Why don't you wear a shirt of skin?' asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'for in that case, you won't feel hurt'. It was not a mere witticism. Here the aching and sympathetic heart of the Master is laid bare, yet he would not shed his tears. He must laugh.

Mahendra Gupta who was a teacher came to see the Master during the recess periods of his school. Even during that short period he served him. Now he must leave, for he had allegiance to his school also. Again Sri Ramakrishna snapped: 'You are like the mistress of the house,

having a litter of seven or eight children. The mistress does not get a moment's rest; and even then she snatches a little time to wait upon the husband'.

Sri Ramakrishna was entering Bosepara Lane of Calcutta. Some local people remarked that Paramahansa Deva and his army were invading their area. Sri Ramakrishna enjoyed the joke and communicated that to his disciples. Years ago, some scoffers used to call him a 'Great Swan' i.e. Paramahansa, and the Master enjoyed that also. For he believed that laughter and jest were a kind of joy. There is bitter antagonism between the Śāktas and the Vaiṣṇavas. But their religious conviction often is a matter of convenience. There is no steadfastness of ideal. A Śākta once worshipped both Goddesses Kālī and Durgā, and a number of goats were sacrificed. But once he stopped the *pūjās*. One asked him in wonder, 'Why is it that you are no longer interested in these *pūjās*?' 'I have lost all interest in such *pūjās*, he replied, 'because my teeth have fallen. And I cannot any longer relish the meat of goats'.

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

During the last fifty years we have seen revolutionary changes taking place in the fields of science, religion, and other branches of learning. Our age is pre-eminently an age of science. The West till very recently identified and equated all knowledge with science. It was declared that what science could not discover or teach, mankind could not learn. The out-and-out rationalists of the West have held that knowledge derived through

sources other than science is just nonsense. Hence the urge of the great prophets of science to create the scientific outlook in the minds of men. The contribution of science is twofold: (1) the creation and construction of a scientific society which makes use of scientific technique and helps to do away with physical labour and (2) the creation of the scientific temper of mind.

Let us distinguish these two contribu-

tions of science. Scientific technique is comparatively a recent factor in our civilization. But the scientific temper is as old as the Greeks. The ancient Greeks were in intense love with Nature and the world around it. They perceived the beauty of the stars and seas, of the mountains and the winds. Further, they yearned for a more intimate understanding of the phenomena of Nature than what a mere outward contemplation would yield. It is this urge which gave the first impulse to scientific knowledge. Thales, Anaxogoras, Heraclitus, and a host of Greek thinkers laid the foundation of modern physics. The first impulse to science is born out of the love of knowledge and not the need for manipulation. Knowledge is sought throughout the history of civilization with two divergent aims. We may seek to know a thing because we love to contemplate it, or to manipulate and have power over it. The former aim leads to the contemplative type of knowledge, such as poetry and philosophy. The latter aim helps us to manipulate Nature's forces with the help of science and its technique.

The development of science has successfully managed to suppress the mystery element in Nature, whose contemplation gave rise to the very foundation of science. Power impulse has attained its zenith in the industrialism of the nineteenth century. It has perfected governmental technique for the dictators of modern Europe. It has created a philosophy of its own. The Pragmatism of James and the Instrumentalism of Dewey are the results of this power impulse. Truth is defined as that which is useful. Science offers astonishingly powerful tools for men to produce intended changes in the environment. Scientific technique has abundantly changed the face of our very life. Man has learned to fly in the air and move under the waters, and ether is at his command.

Drudgery is reduced to a minimum; leisure is being made possible for all.

These advantages of science are the direct result of this power-impulse. But the spirit in which the changes have been effected has nothing in common with the genuine scientific temper. The practical mechanics are full of a sense of limitless power, of arrogant certainty. They further want to manipulate the minds of men by the application of certain laws of Dietetics and Bio-Chemistry, and thus help the modern dictators in creating the totalitarian states. But this power-impulse (i.e. manipulating skill) was in the early stages a mere camp follower in the army of knowledge. It has now suddenly usurped command by virtue of its unforeseen success. Governed by utility, it has become a tyrant of Nature.

But scientific technique is not without its defects. There is an unavoidable tragedy in the working of power. Absolute power is bound to be badly used. There is an inevitable psychology about the way power-impulse works itself out. The holders of power generally take power itself to be the greatest end.

But power in itself is not an evil to be avoided. Power and knowledge are in themselves neutral. 'Knowledge is good, ignorance is evil, power is neutral.' To these general principles no sane man will admit exceptions. It is by the use to which power is put that we judge it. Power should subserve noble ends and not erect itself as an end. Moreover there is something inevitable and dynamic in the use of power. The holders of power cannot rest content; rest is not for them. They will be perpetually engaged in some fresh manipulation. Hence the necessity to check the uses of power. Science has delivered us from the bondage of Nature, and we must take care not to become its slaves in turn,

The second contribution of science is the creation of the scientific temper of mind. The scientist begins with the study of empirical facts, and makes significant observations. From the data supplied by observation he draws sufficiently probable generalizations through the application of the principle of induction. Then he postulates a few hypotheses and verifies them. The scientist sets at naught authority and tradition, and believes only what evidence indicates. He does not take to the study of fact with any pre-conceived theory of Reality in mind. He just studies the facts of Nature with the hope that it would be possible for him to predict possible future occurrences. The scientific temper of mind is cautious, tentative, broad and piecemeal. It aims at the understanding of nature and not the establishment of this or that theory. It is an invaluable corrective to the defects of ordinary knowledge, viz., vagueness, cocksureness, and self-contradictoriness. The scientist strives after precision, and minimizes the possibilities of error, though he cannot totally abolish it. Where evidence is lacking, he suspends his judgment, and does not recklessly repudiate. He believes that science at best can yield only sufficiently probable results and not absolutely certain truths. Probability is the central dogma of science today. Science engenders the rationalistic attitude in the minds of men—the refusal to believe conventions and institutions merely because we find them in the field. It is the critical and enquiring spirit of man. Besides these direct advantages of science, the scientific temper of mind produces certain salutary effects on the minds of men. Sanity and stoical attitudes are characteristic features of the scientific mind. Science emancipates us from the struggles of daily life; it engenders a clean and lofty detachment from the world. There is a sense in which the scientific temper may

be said to approach the religious attitude. It is a bold attitude to life. Its dangers are not the dangers of death, but the dangers of life.

II

But the scientific temper of mind does not 'deliver the goods'. It fails to discover the whole truth; and the picture of the world it gives us is a dry statement of formulas and equations. The ruthless analysis of the scientist has reduced Nature, the bridge of the bards, into a skeleton of rattling bones, cold and dreadful. There are certain aspects of life that do not come under the purview of science. Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Happiness are fundamental feelings and cannot be studied with the help of scientific formulae. Moreover the scientist has a tendency to mistake the Real for the rational. Absorbed in the investigation of natural phenomena which can be counted, measured and experimented upon, he ignores the deeper elements in human life which are mathematically indeterminable. The scientific pattern is incomplete and it follows from this that the complexities of life cannot be solved by simple remedies. In human life, there is a certain residue of irrationality and waywardness which must be allowed for. The ills of our world cannot be banished by the adoption of any single set of reforms—socialism or pacifism, fascism or any particular *dharma*. Finally the scientific temper and philosophy, if carried to their logical limit, would lead us to the conviction that life is purposeless, and the universe a cruel, practical joke. And this attitude, therefore, if applied to practical life, would result in moral chaos.

The great change that is to be effected in the use of power cannot be carried out by mechanical means, or political adjust-

ments. It has to be effected by a spiritual education, which fills life with a purpose and helps men to realize the fundamental unity of things. It is only in spiritual realization that the intellect can be guided in the proper path. Without the certainty and the emotional awareness of the fundamental unity of things, the need for the practice of ethical virtues cannot be perceived. Religion is that kind of education by which human beings can train themselves to become better and improve their relations with one another. Non-violence, charity and other virtues are the practical consequence of such an act of faith and realization. Great economic and political reforms must thus be carried out in the proper psychological and spiritual context. Real reform must eradicate the evil at the very source and origin, i.e. the individual. What we need today is individual remaking and not spurious society reforming.

Human nature can be changed and the behaviour pattern which men have built around them can be remade only if the proper spiritual means are adopted. It is

the neglect of these means that has made twentieth century political thinking incredibly primitive; the nation is personified as a living being with passions and desires, superhuman in size, but sub-human in morality. It is the blindness to such methods that has made scientific technique the most dangerous menace to our lives. We live in an atmosphere of militant nationalism and air bombing. 'We are taught to fly in the air like birds and to swim in the water like fishes, but how to live on earth, we do not know'. And this atmosphere can be cleared only by the cultivation of virtues and the spiritual realization of the unity of life and the value of the individual. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says: 'There is nothing higher than Puruṣa (the inmost self of all individual) in the scheme of life. Beyond the Self there is nothing, this is the final and the supreme goal.' (I. iii. 11) The realization of this truth spurs us on to the right activity. Without such a realization scientific knowledge and scientific temper are of no use.

APPROACH TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

In India, as in most countries, the most challenging problems of educational provision and organization are those that involve the education of young people from about 11 or 12 years of age to 17 or 18. The education of this stage, called Secondary Education, is a vital part of the educational edifice of a country mostly because it offers to take charge of its young people about 70 per cent of whom prepare to settle themselves in society. As Secondary Education happens to be the

end of all formal education for the majority of the population; it must assume the responsibility of providing the necessary training for complete living. The educational activities at this stage have been made extremely complicated because the very conception of Secondary Education is still in transition and the practical problems in the field are hampered by a confusion of aims and a conflict of views in different sectors of the community.

To halt the drift in the educational activi-

ties (for which our administrators have been blamed occasionally), the aims and objects of education, particularly those of Secondary Education, need to be defined in very clear terms. If someone studies the widely diverging views regarding the aims of education he is forced to the conclusion, frankly and clearly stated by the Scottish Report on Secondary Education (1947): 'What is the aim of education is a question that admits of no answer without a reference to ultimate convictions about human nature and destiny, about society and how the individual stands related to it.' In post-Independent India, the educational administrators have attempted to bring education closer to the realities, as will be evident in the reports of different committees and commissions.

The rapid changes influenced by the scientific and technological revolution, and by sociological developments have caused a radical rethinking of the aims of education. At the philosophical level, thinkers like John Dewey have developed a synthesis of the cultural 'liberal' education of the well-to-do section of earlier societies and the narrow vocational training considered fit for the working classes. The practical educators were busy in evolving a comprehensive set of aims to help devise a curriculum suitable to the new conditions. The report on Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (U.S.A.), 1918, enunciated the principles in most general terms and suggested construction of the curriculum in such a way that it would help every pupil to conserve his health, develop a command of fundamental scholastic processes, play his part as a worthy member of his home, prepare himself for a suitable vocation to enable him to take his place in society as a citizen, give him the means of constructively using his leisure, and develop an

ethical character. Professor John S. Brubacher, Professor of Education, University of Michigan, writes: 'The most notable omission from this list is religion. It may be that its authors mistakenly thought this to be included in the item of ethical character, or it may be that the list was being recommended as a programme for public schools from which religious instruction is ordinarily barred. In either even, with its inclusion, this enumeration of educational values should be fairly complete and satisfactory.' However, the narrow conception of education with the great emphasis on the intellectual aspects of human personality has now made room for the inclusion of social, aesthetic, moral, and ethical values and the everyday needs and interests of the growing adolescent. The aims of education of most of the countries have generally been constructed almost similar to those mentioned in the seven cardinal principles with some social slant for reasons of the countries' existing handicaps and future aspirations.

A comprehensive survey of the history of Secondary Education of the last fifty years reveals certain major factors bearing on the complexities of Secondary Education.

The first is the vast expansion and extension of the facilities of Secondary Education partly due to population explosion and partly as a natural consequence of the expansion of primary education. The second tendency is the development of an organic connexion between primary and secondary education which was developed for different purposes and for different groups of children. The third advancement can be seen in the theory and practice of curriculum building. Besides the striking achievements in science and technology followed by social developments, the extension of secondary schooling to children for whom it was not originally

designed, particularly those of the lower socio-economic strata of the community and those of lower scholastic ability, has naturally led towards an integration of cultural and vocational elements that have so long been kept separate. The general or liberal education traditionally provided by the secondary schools had always been highly academic, designed as it was to lead to the scholarly pursuits of the university. However, the rise in the complexity of industrial processes demands of young people better general education followed by broad-based specialization at a later stage. The net effect of this trend has led the secondary school to work out a balanced curriculum and devise methods of a general education which can accommodate all young people, including those average and below average, as well to keep up a high standard for pupils of high scholastic ability. With these radical changes accelerated since 1930, the new outlook has enabled the educators to accept the conception of secondary education as simply the phase following the elementary phase, rather than a different kind of education meant for a particular section of society.

The University Education Commission observed in 1948: 'Our Secondary Education remains the weakest link in our educational machinery and needs urgent reform.' To suggest measures for the reorganization and improvement of Secondary Education and to consider provisions 'such as the desirability of changing over from the prevailing system of Secondary Education which is unilateral and predominantly academic in nature to one which will cater at the secondary stage to different aptitudes and interests', the Government of India appointed the Secondary Education Commission in 1952. While considering the huge panorama of Secondary Education of different countries, the

Secondary Education Commission addressed itself to the task of formulating the aims of Secondary Education in 'more specific terms' with special reference to the needs and the ideals of our country in its actual situation. In the Commission's opinion the most outstanding and educationally relevant facts in the Indian situation were (1) the adoption of the goals of democracy and socialism necessitating the development among the people of a broad national and secular outlook; (2) the extreme poverty of the country demanding the urgency of promoting its economic growth; and (3) the neglect of cultural pursuits and activities for want of suitable educational facilities. On the basis of this analysis, the Commission revised the aims and objectives of Secondary Education. This set of aims and objectives seems to have proved by this time to be inadequate as will be evident from the various criticisms from different quarters as well as from the discussion paper on Secondary Education prepared by the present Commission (1965).

Again stating aims is a different thing from finding the means of putting them into practice. The educational institutions still bound by older practices, by rigid curriculum prescriptions, by shortage of suitable teaching materials, by an acute shortage of qualified and enlightened teachers, and by an absence of facilities for character-building education have discharged their responsibilities so poorly that not only do the major defects pointed out by the Secondary Education Commission still persist but some additional complexities have appeared owing to the introduction of the new ideas. This has aggravated the situation so much so that the Government of India has had to take recourse to setting up of another Commission in 1965 before the elapse of even a decade. A portion of the text of the

resolution of the Government of India which set up the present Commission needs attention: '... the system of education has not generally evolved in accordance with the needs of the times; a wide and distressing gulf continues to persist between thought and action in several sectors of this crucial field of national activity.'

Though it is useful to seek common trends between countries, a comprehensive view of education of country demonstrates that each system of education is unique, because the educational system of a country mirrors its social system, its aims, and the aspiration of the nation. Professor Philip H. Phenix writes: 'Differences in educational practice—in courses of study, teaching methods, administrative procedures, and patterns of support and control—are generally reflections of differing beliefs about such matters as human nature, knowledge, values, and the good society.' The educational system of a country being the product of a set of historical circumstances, lack of genuine appreciation of the uniqueness of a country's system will surely baffle the attempts of planners, however potentially valuable they may appear to be. A study of the literature published by different committees and the Commission reveals the uncomfortable fact that the fundamental characteristics of the national life on which we should build up the educational structure have not been given their proper recognition. Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and even Jawaharlal Nehru emphasized the reassertion of the national ideals with the help of education. Everyone of them welcomed radical reforms without discarding the fundamental values of the country's historical heritage. Swami Vivekananda, in a letter addressed to Justice Sir Subramanya Iyer, emphasized: 'Each nation

has a main current in life; in India, it is religion. Make it strong and the waters on either side must move along with it.' In another place we find Swami Vivekananda writing again: 'But one point to note here is that when we take anything from others, we must mould it after our own way. We shall add to our stock what others have to teach, but we must always be careful to keep intact what is essentially own.'

We have failed miserably to evolve yet a system of education which is essentially our own. While trying to find a broad-based nationalism in our secular democratic state, we have missed to get hold of the major strands of national life, resulting in a serious crisis of values. This is mostly because the leaders have failed to uphold the fundamentals of national life in keeping with the traditional values. For the same reason, the so-called problem of emotional integration among the people could not be solved satisfactorily yet. Even the illuminating report of the Committee on emotional integration has neglected to recognize the core of life-current which, according to Swami Vivekananda, is nothing but spirituality. The Commission on National Education (1960) of the Government of Pakistan, too, stated in unambiguous terms that the Secondary Education should address itself (1) to provide a form of education which has its roots in the national culture and in Islamic values; (2) to nurture a pride in the nation; an understanding of its history and aspirations, and a willingness to serve it; (3) to create an appreciation of the universal brotherhood of man and a spirit of internationalism under study. Here in India, under foreign domination, for a long time the country's education was overshadowed by a foreign hand which was foreign in aim, method, substance, and spirit. The glammers of western way of life and the mist of educa-

tion for 'babus' hang over still now, impoverishing the national mind, soul, and character. The educational institutions of the country have to impart to her youths the values for the future built on the foundation of the grand ideas enshrined in own culture which can sustain us through eternity. We can keep tradition alive not by repeating what has been said or done by our ancestors, but by solving our present-day problems in the same spirit in which the *ṛsis* and the great seers met theirs. Committing ourselves to a democratic and secular state, need we take refuge under the shadow of ambiguous and obscure ideas? We can make our stand better if we define our objects boldly, keeping in view the spirit of the traditional values and present-day needs.

The national leaders have stated occasionally that the nation lives in villages. Agriculture is still the major industry of the nation. In terms of population distribution about eighty-three per cent of the people live in villages and their major occupation is agriculture. This stark reality has unfortunately not been reflected in the objectives, and naturally the programmes for implementing the objectives utterly lack suitable provision for strengthening this vital sector of the national life, although we are suffering from shortage of food production and long-standing grinding poverty of the majority of the population. Although during the past eighty years almost every Commission and important Committee set up proposed measures for vocationalization of education, our average secondary schools today still provide for a predominantly academic course which, it is said, 'fits' a boy for entrance into college but 'unfits' him for everything else. While the Secondary Education Commission expressed the view that the education imparted in the multi-purpose schools would be terminal educa-

tion for the majority of students, it was not clear what exactly the expression meant. No less confusing is it to find that the introduction of practical courses like agriculture and commerce did not necessarily imply introduction of any vocational training. The agriculture course prescribed by the said Commission was a feeble attempt to erect some weak props for collegiate education in agriculture. The University Education Commission envisaged the basic and post-basic institutions to take care of the essence of agriculture education, i.e. the training of farmers' sons who will go back to their farms and work on them more efficiently. This has not been worked out. Rural Higher Institutes which were entrusted with giving practical application of knowledge to the varieties of Indian rural life have failed even to provide a village-oriented approach to the problems of agriculture. Education has thus shirked off its responsibility of meeting one of the country's basic needs.

This confusion has got to be dispelled and the different aspects of agricultural education, viz teaching, extension, and research, should immediately be distributed suitably to the Rural Institutes, the Manjari type of schools, the Basic Agricultural Schools, Janata colleges, etc. No less important than agricultural education is to introduce a national system of education, befitting the ideology and aspirations of the nation for the vast population of rural India.

Last but not the least to mention is the lack of emphasis on the role of education for national survival. The way India won freedom from the clutch of colonial powers hardly finds a parallel in any other large democratic country. India as an independent nation never harnessed or consolidated her military strength, and was rather unmindful about it prior to the Chinese aggression in 1962. India never

advocates aggression and violence, but as long dangers and threat continue along her long borders we shall have to conduct our national life in such a way as to insure for ourselves as a free nation with sufficient national strength to protect ourselves and if necessary, other friendly nations. This is not a new idea, for we find mention of this idea in Plato's description of the education of the guardians in his famous '*Republic*'. The half-hearted programmes of national preparedness like compulsory N.C.C. for college boys and *sainik* schools can hardly justify their claim for effective preparedness though a national emergency hangs over the country due to the threat of aggression across the country's border. It is high time for us to accept the hard truth that what serves as an educational objective for a limited professional group in the population has got to be transformed into a comprehensive educational principle. Education, particularly at the secondary level has to be geared to as to provide education as a part of our apparatus for national defence.

Besides the specific objectives, some of which have been suggested here the outlook in its totality should be determined first. Now a close study of the unique system of education of different countries should

suggest to the present-day planners of education the possibility of taking the best of the following four outstanding features: (1) The Soviet insistence on raising the educational level of all, rather than allowing a few bright ones to monopolize the field; (2) the American concern for the freedom of the individual to move at his own best pace, along the lines he needs; (3) England's traditional faith in 'meritocracy' in a liberal democratic society; and (4) France's social and educational equality of opportunity without discarding the grand tradition of *Culture Generale*. The Education Commission should come forward to decide right now to what extent and which of the basic features mentioned should be accepted. But let us make sure that we have to prepare a plan which is truly Indian in character, in order to introduce a phased programme and to take bold steps to help evolve the emerging new India. As Secondary Education happens to be the end of all formal education for the majority of its citizens it must assume the responsibility of providing them with the necessary technical efficiency, moral judgement and a sense of values by which India can stand out as a nation and contribute her share to the pool of world culture.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Srimat Swami Yatiswaranandaji Maharaj who passed away recently, was the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order. The article 'Reminiscences of Swami Brahmananda' is one of his illuminating recollections, left by him and we reproduce the same for our readers here.

Sayings and utterances of Sri Ramakrishna are always deep in divine touches as well as buoyant in innocent humour that find their way to the inward recesses of our heart. Dr. S. P. Sengupta, M.A., Ph.D. (London), Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Head of the Department of English, University of North Bengal, highlights in the present section of his

essence of the universe is the Ātman and that anyone having the desire and capacity can realize it. Accordingly, the method is that of *adhyāropa-apavāda*. The author takes up this method and applies it, following Gauḍapāda, to the waking, dream, and sleep states. Thereby he points out how Vedānta overcomes scepticism, solipsism, appearance-and-reality dualism, and the conflict of idealism and realism.

The first four chapters deal with 'Pure Consciousness as Reality'. Then there is a stimulating account of Advaitic ethics. One full chapter deals with Māyā in a succinct fashion. The difficult problem of perception is examined in detail. The last six chapters provide a critical examination of European idealism from the standpoint of Advaita.

The author's treatment of the *avasthās* ignores *turiya*.

The work is the best possible introduction to Śaṅkara's system of Advaita. The critical insight of the author is basically sound and valuable; and the sources of Advaitic philosophy are, as we are clearly told, Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, and one's own experience. The book repays a careful study.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

REVERENCE FOR LIFE. BY ALBERT SCHWEITZER. EDITED BY THOMAS KIERNAN. Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. 1965. Pages 74. Price \$2.75.

Albert Schweitzer is well known for his great humanitarian work in Africa. A philosopher and moralist, he built his system of thought round the concept of reverence for life. He has the greatest concern for the problems of the human spirit.

The seventeen essays forming the present volume cover religion, philosophy, literature, and life. The selections are fairly representative of the application of the central concept of reverence to the different aspects of life. The ethical philosophy governing this concept comprehends within itself 'love, devotion, and sympathy, whether in suffering, joy, or effort'.

The essays are based on personal experiences and convictions, and as such come to us with a rare touch of intimacy, not usually found in the writings of the academic philosophers.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

AN INVITATION TO THINK. BY M. V. NAIDU. Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. 1965. Pages 60. Price \$2.75.

The advance of science has drawn into sharp focus the conflict between science and humanism. Human life is being transformed by science. But science is not humanized. To meet this present posi-

tion, Mr. M. V. Naidu proposes critical thinking on human values embodying truth, beauty, love, and joy. A critical attitude based on a simple, rational, and analytical approach is advocated. The book is written in a simple and fascinating way.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

SCIENCE, FAITH AND LOGIC. BY HOLGER CHRISTIAN LANGMACK. Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. 1965. Pages 146. Price \$6.

Mr. Holger Christian Langmack, a dedicated Christian philosopher and teacher, earlier wrote *God and the Universe*. To the pious Christian, the greatest enemy is communism. The present work exposes the theory and practice of communism, and it reveals the truth about God. Langmack himself has offered charts covering justice, true reason, true unity, and good cross.

In the course of sixteen chapters, the author realizes the great need to harmonize science and religion, though by religion he means only Christianity. Science has moved from extended space to circular space-time; and religion, through the existentialists, has come to value man's aesthetic activity here and now. And the author seeks to present the logical unification of absoluteness of reason and relativity of emotions. This is an aspect of existentialism on its religious side.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

HINDI

PARAMAHAMSA CARIT. COMPILED BY SWAMI VIJNANANANDA. RAMAKRISHNA MATH, ALLAHABAD. 1964. PAGES 200. PRICE Rs. 2.

This beautifully got-up book now in its fourth edition is perhaps the earliest book published in Hindi in 1904 about Sri Ramakrishna Deva by one of his direct disciples, the late Swami Vijnanananda. The first sixty-one pages of the book deal with the life of Sri Ramakrishna and contain almost all the important events of his wonderful godly life. The rest of the book contains a well chosen collection of his teachings which are simple and at the same time full of deep meaning. They touch the heart almost directly and solve many intricate spiritual problems easily. The language of the book is lucid and forceful. We hope this book will be found useful for all Hindi knowing people who are interested in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and desire to benefit by them. The book is quite moderately priced too. The publishers need be congratulated for this useful publication.

S. C.

MALAYALAM

SRI SARADA DEVI, JIVITACARITRAM: By SRIMATI K. P. LILAMMA. SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, VILANGAN, P.O. PURANATTUKARA, TRICHUR, KERALA. 1965. Pages 349. Price Rs. 5.

This is one of the best books written on Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna. In fact, it may surpass many of the existing biographies on Sri Sarada Devi. Like the beautiful English life by Swami Tapasyananda, published a few decades ago and on which the author has greatly leaned, the present book will go into Malayalam as a classic. The author is a devotee of the Holy Mother and she justifies her devotion by writing this book on her. A translated excerpt from the author's introduction to the book (of course, in translation, much of the originality may be lost) alone will suffice to show how deeply Srimati Lilamma has understood the message and personality of the Holy Mother.

'In Sri Sarada Devi, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, motherhood has attained a super-human perfection. At the same time, her life exemplifies all the ideals held dear by womankind; it is an embodiment of purity and chastity. Neither dexterity, nor eloquence, nor extraordinary qualities make her life worthy of emulation. The highest human aspirations, which would have remained obscure and imaginary ideals in the world, have become live truths by her incarnation. She shines as an eternal star in the spiritual firmament of India lighting for ever the path to perfection and purity for all posterity. ... Sarada Devi is the very representative of purity. May her life inspire us to lead a Godly life.'

Malayalam is richer today by possessing this biography. The language is charming and the get-up elegant. I heartily recommend this book to all lovers of India and Malayalam.

SWAMI GABHIRANANDA

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA PURI

REPORT FOR THE YEARS 1961-62 TO 1964-65

The activities of this branch of the Ramakrishna Mission are mainly educational. During the period under review the activities were the following:

Public Library and Reading Room: The library, the leading one in the State, had 17,795 books in languages Oriya, Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit and English. In 1964-65 the total number of readers was 39,641, daily average being 110; the number of free readers of books 7,423. The Reading Room of the library subscribes 12 dailies and 41 magazines.

Text Book Library and the Children's Library: The text book library, meant exclusively for the students of the Ashrama Students' Home had 1,065 books and the children's library had 561 books during the year. Special classes, lectures and recitation competitions were arranged regularly in the children's library for its children members.

Students' Home: The Students' Home, the only one run by the Ramakrishna Mission in the State of Orissa for the uplift of the Schedule Tribes, Schedule castes and backward communities, had 65

and 56 students during 1953-64 and 1964-65 respectively belonging mostly to the poor backward classes. The students followed a programme of daily prayers, sports, community cleanings, religious and tutorial classes and other necessary disciplines regularly. Important festivals and birthdays of the saints were also observed during the period. Results of the students who sat for different university examinations had been quite encouraging. Of the students during 1964-65, 2 passed B.A. (appeared 2), 1 passed Pre-university (appeared 1) and 8 passed H.Sc. examination (appeared 9).

General: The Juvenile Recreation Section (started since 1954) provided facilities of healthy games and sports for the children. Swami Vivekananda birth centenary celebrations were duly observed by the Ashrama during 1963 through a three-day long programme. Special *pūjā* was performed and *prasāds* were distributed. The students of the local schools and colleges joined the elocution competitions, organized on the occasion, and received prizes. The celebration was inaugurated at the ashrama premises by a public meeting with Dr. H. K. Mahatab at the chair.